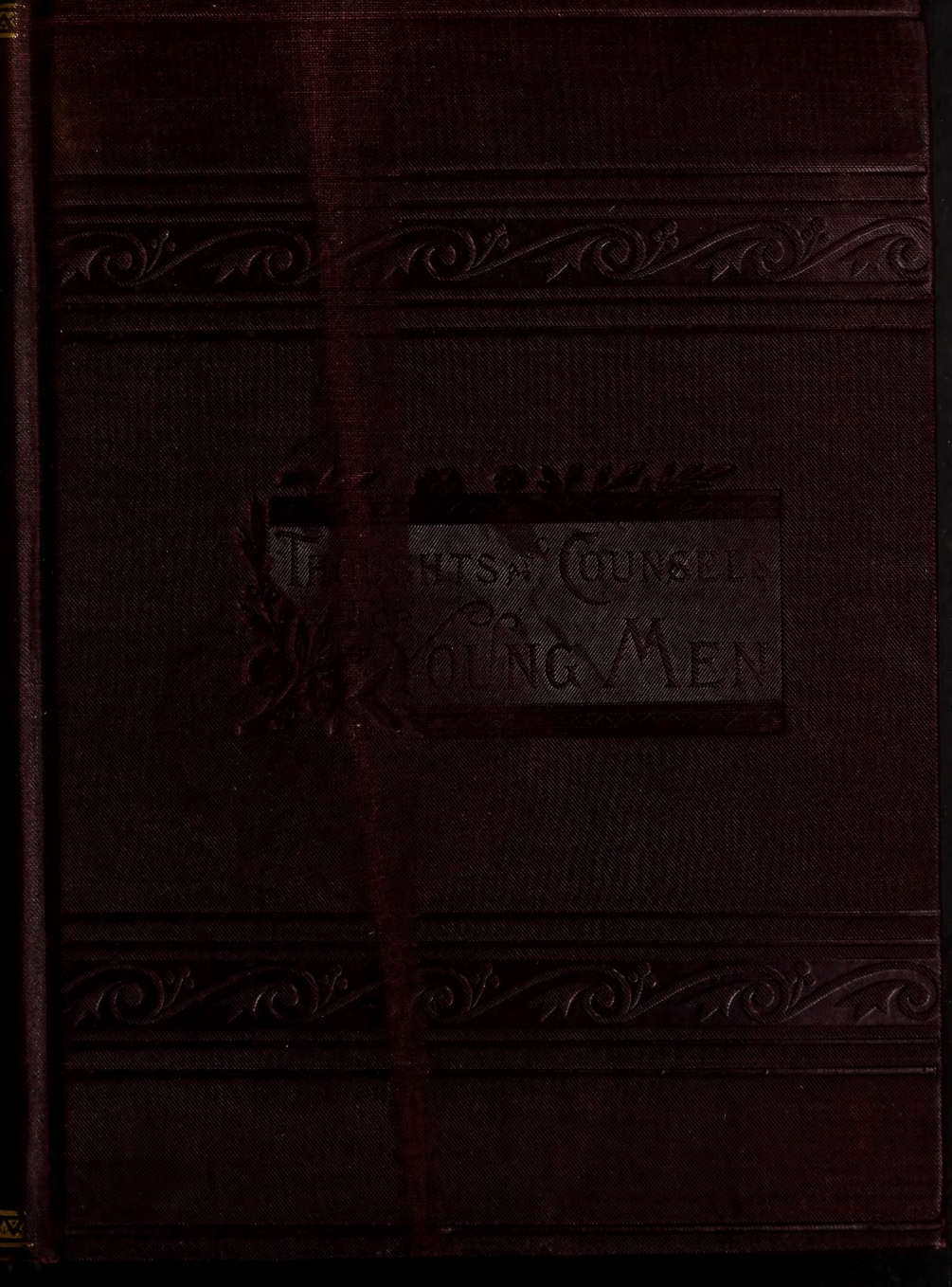
HTS AND COUNSELS
OUNG MEN

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

THOUGHTS AND COUNSELS,

FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF

CATHOLIC YOUNG MEN.

BY

REV. P. A. VON DOSS, S.J.

FREELY TRANSLATED AND ADAPTED

BY

REV. AUGUSTINE WIRTH, O.S.B.

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Gospel. St. Luke 7: 11-16.

11. And it came to pass, after this, that he went into a city called Naim: and there went with him his disciples, and a great multitude.

12. And when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, a dead man was carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her.

13. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said to her: Weep not.

14. And he came near and touched the bier. (And they that carried it, stood still.) And he said: Young man, I say to thee, arise!

15. And he that was dead, sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother.

16. And there came a fear on them all: and they glorified God, saying: That a great prophet is risen up among us: and God hath visited his people.

PREFACE.

A great many pernicious thoughts and counsels are imparted to young men now-a-days, in books and newspapers —in familiar conversation, and in the more studied effusions of the lecture-room. On all sides they are made acquainted with worldly thoughts, hollow thoughts, erroneous thoughts, bad, abominable thoughts, godless thoughts. Evil counsels are given them for the very purpose of effecting their ruin—counsels to sinful enjoyment and luxurious habits, to neglect of duty, to disorder and rebellion, to revenge, dissipation, and contempt of God.—O hellish, soul-destroying counsels !

Who can blame the true friend of youth, when he feels urged on his part, to proffer to young men thoughts and counsels which are assuredly for the good, and the spiritual progress of their immortal souls, for their true happiness here below, and their eternal happiness hereafter ?

Shall hell, alone, have the exclusive right to capture our youth, and to bury them for ever in its black abyss ?

Say what you will—a young heart is a young heart,—it is soft, tender, accessible—easily won to well-doing by charity and sympathy. O—let us save it while we can ! It is well for the mature man, for the aged man, to repent ; but who shall restore to such their lost time ? who requite them for their long wanderings in the fatiguing by-paths of sin ? Who shall give back to them the once-beautiful innocent freshness of their youth ?

Even though very few young men take to heart these

"good thoughts and salutary counsels, "—if but one soul be rescued from perdition, if but one youth be saved by that awakening cry : "I say to thee, arise !" all the labor and efforts of the writer will be amply repaid. It is to be hoped, however, that good young men, into whose hands this little book may fall, will find means and ways of passing it on to a friend who may need advice and assistance in order to follow that injunction of Christ : "Arise !"

In proposing these "Thoughts and Counsels" to our young readers, we presume them to be persons of a believing mind,—in whose hearts still live at least some feeble germs of faith. With unbelievers we would deal differently ;—in their case, a foundation of faith would first have to be laid.

Our present process of development is as follows :

A young man has yielded to temptation ; he has sinned, more or less grievously. Heark !—the trumpet tones of eternal truth are heard ! He is reminded of his final aim and end, of the value of his immortal soul. He is shown how precious is the season of youth ; the malice of mortal sin and its dreadful consequences are brought before him, as well as the presumption of the sinner who builds upon an uncertain future. He is encouraged to sacrifice himself, to take steps towards a reconciliation, for which the tortured heart has long been yearning. A saving Sacrament is pointed out to him, divine in its institution, heavenly in its blessings. He is advised to approach it; and behold !—the dead young man arises from the grave ! The mighty Master of life and death, our Lord Jesus Christ, has stretched forth to him his life-giving hand, and snatched him from death, as he did the widow's son at the gate of the city of Naim. Newly converted to God, the young man rejoices in his resurrection, and the first act of his freshly restored life is to requite the mercy of the Lord by a true spirit of penance.

Let him who lives, however, take care lest he die again! The greatest of dangers now threaten the penitent soul. An inordinate affection for creatures may only too easily bring about another, and more fatal, death. What are creatures? what is the world? Vanity, nothingness, lies, deception! Again, there is the enemy within the walls: blindness, weakness, negligence, frivolity, the countless progeny of human passions! It is of the highest importance to know well these vicious traitors. Their hatefulness, rightly considered, must necessarily fill us with repugnance, and urge us to self-distrust. The road which leads to relapse into sin is paved with a foolish human respect, presumptuous confidence in sinful occasions, reckless contempt of temptations, and a wrong manner of conducting one's self under them, a disregard of those small faults which so easily open the way to grievous sins—the habitual neglect of prayer, and of the holy Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist.

But what young man, having once been raised up by God from the deadly sickness of sin, would be satisfied to remain the rest of his life a convalescent in the spiritual life? No, the repentant soul longs to grow robust and healthy, to thrive, to work, to act. The Saviour, on his side, invites her to do great things. Yea, the divine Model, Jesus Christ, presents himself before this active soul, armed and ready for the combat. "Follow me," he says, "march forward under my banner, and conquer the kingdom of the virtues!" And how many and sublime are these virtues—virtues which have for their object, by turns, God, our fellow-men, ourselves, and the various duties and relations of our state of life. The young man must become acquainted with all these; he must try to love them, and learn to practise them.

The past, present, the future, and above all, the ser-

ious, all-important question of vocation, the choice of one's state of life, must all engross him in turn. The science of the ascetic, the study of the Religious life, is replete with a multitude of sublime considerations and exalted reflections, well worthy the attention of the laity,—and especially, of our young Catholic men. From the practice of what is good, one is led gently on to aspire to "the better part;" Christian perfection, here below, attaining its closest resemblance to God, is rewarded in the world to come by a corresponding degree of the Beatific Vision,—the possession, and fruition of God.

Even the virtues have their degrees and comparative values; and it is the duty of the Christian "to ascend by steps in this valley of tears," to go from one degree of virtue to another, until he reaches, at last, the most exalted heights of holiness.

Charity is the foundation, the soul, the crown of all virtues; but charity, too, has its degrees. The nearer it approaches the love of God, the purer is the gold of this virtue. God is all love. How does he love us? By imparting to us himself and all that he has. He confers benefits without measure and number, and these benefits he confers with his own hand, and, so to say, in his own person. He dispenses his favors with a lavish expenditure of love, which does not hesitate, in a measure, at self-annihilation. He communicates his perfections to creatures, so that finding him every where, within and without us, we might the less hesitate to annihilate ourselves in our turn.—"I die daily," every Christian must be ready to say with St. Paul; and this death of nature in the spiritual man is the forerunner of a blessed resurrection, first, from sin and all affection thereto, and afterwards, from the death of the body to that glorious twofold life which awaits the just at their departure from this

life. Thus, the young man is shown the beginning, progress, and completion of his whole spiritual career.

Thus, faith leads us gradually upwards, nearer and nearer to the throne of the Most High and the Most Holy. Thus, the circle is closed : from God, to God.

As will be seen from this brief exposition, our "Thoughts and Counsels" offer to young men of widely-different dispositions grave points for their consideration, and admirable lessons for their daily life.

The many passages from Scripture interwoven therewith are intended to render more effectual the poor work and word of man,—to give them as it were, a higher consecration, by means of the unction of the Holy Ghost.

Each chapter is complete in itself ; all, however, have a common purpose and significance.

The book is by no means to be skimmed through in a cursory way. According to the manner indicated in the 116th chapter, it is to be read a little at a time, with serious deliberation, and with practical application to the spiritual needs of the reader.

Farewell, my dear young man ! Be solicitous for your salvation. Only one thing is necessary. Work while it is day, work early in the morning of your life. Night may come quicker than you expect. May the Lord grant you courage and perseverance, that, sanctifying these opening years of your manhood, your holy youth may be crowned by a still holier old age. May Mary, your tender mother —your holy Angel Guardian, with St. Aloysius, the patron of youth—assist you, and conduct you, after a pure and perfect life, to the mansions of everlasting bliss !

FIRST BOOK.

THE RETURN.

I

1.

RESURRECTIONS.

"*I am the resurrection and the life : he that believeth in me, although he be dead, shall live.*" (John 11 : 25.)

Young man, behold your own image in the son of the widow of Naim !

The corpse of a young man is carried out of the city—cold, stiff, motionless ; whilst the grief-stricken mother following the bier, sheds torrents of tears over her irreparable loss.

Alas ! for the young men who are spiritually dead in mortal sin ! That tenderest of mothers, the holy Church of Christ, weeps most bitterly, as she beholds them borne to the grave, or rather plunging themselves voluntarily into the tomb of Eternity, into the everlasting, horrible hell.

A dangerous slumber, a kind of lingering death, is the state of luke-warmness, in which the soul, weighed down by multitudes of venial sins, loses its vigor, and sinks imperceptibly into the grave.

A feeble and uncertain spiritual life indicates a want of progress, a stand-still in good, a criminal sloth in the service of God.

From all these states of spiritual death or decay, Christ our Lord calls back the soul to full and active life, for he is not the God of the dead, but of the living. (Mark 12 : 27.)

Rise thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ will enlighten thee. (Ephes. 5 : 14.)

Still more : we must grow in all things in the power of Christ, who is our head. Yes, the path of the just, as a shining light, goeth forwards, and increaseth even to perfect day. (Prov. 4 : 18.)

God wills that you may have life, and may have it more abundantly. (John 10 : 10.)

Young man, permit yourself to be awakened. Allow the omnipotent power of your Saviour to display itself also in your behalf. Hear the life-giving call of his grace and follow it.

Young man, I say to thee, arise ! (Luke 7 : 14.)

So young, and yet already dead—dead in mortal sin ! How the Church mourns over you, and with the Church, how many a well-meaning solicitous heart which knows your state or surmises it. How heaven mourns over you, and longs for your resurrection!

Young man, I say to thee, arise !

Rise from this state of slumber, of incipient death. You are neither cold nor hot (Apoc. 3 : 14), hence, you nauseate even the loving, long-suffering Heart of God. Oh ! grow warm once more in divine love and become as a refreshing draught to the true Friend of your soul. Begin again to live, to work, to act, to be, in short, a living man.

Young man, I say to thee, arise !

Not only arise,—but courageously push forward and upward. Aspire to higher things—to the things that are above. Behold, the hand of the Lord is not shortened that it cannot save. (Is. 59 : 1.) God is still rich in mercies to all that call upon him (Rom. 10 : 12), and ask for his graces. He who has invited us to be perfect, as his heavenly Father is perfect (Matt. 5 : 48)—he, the Faithful and True, will strengthen you and keep you from evil. (2. Thes. 3 : 3.) He requires nothing but what you can by his grace fulfil ; he will work in you, and with you, that you may grow unto

a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of his fulness. (Ephes. 4 : 13.)

I am the resurrection and the life, says the Lord (John 11 : 25) ; believe, trust in me, and though you should be dead, entirely dead, you shall live.

And if you now live,—again : Believe, trust, cleave to me, who am the Way, the Truth, the Life (John 14 : 6), and you shall never die—you shall never die the death of sin —neither by the swift strokes of mortal sin, nor the insidious poison of tepidity ; nor shall you hereafter see death for ever.

O Lord, what good shall I do, that I may have life everlasting ? (Matt. 19 : 16.) What shall I do that I may recover my true life, yea, confirm and perfect it ?

Reflect. Consider. Ponder upon those truths which are able to give life to the dead, much more awaken those who merely slumber.

Are there not such ?

Behold, young man, our holy religion abounds with them! Draw forth the forgotten treasure into the light, and having reflected seriously, having discovered the things that are to your peace, take courage and lay your hand to the plow : root up, pull down, destroy, build, plant. God will surely increase the growth of the fulness of your justice (2. Cor. 9 : 10) if you once make a beginning, and are truly in earnest to be converted from your evil ways.

2.

THE TIME OF YOUTH.

"Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth."
(Eccles. 12 : 1.)

The beautiful time of youth—so poorly understood by the many ! The seed-time, the spring-time of life—you should enjoy it as the brightest and fairest season of your earthly sojourn.

But O say not with the wicked : Come and let us enjoy the good things that are present, and let us speedily use the creatures as in youth. And let not the flower of the time pass by us. (Wisdom 2 : 6, 7.)

Put a nobler construction on those much-abused words.

Does not all time belong to the Lord ?

He is the joy and light of youth as well as the support and consolation of old age.

Your whole being is interwoven with God. You are from him, through him, for him. Everything you have is his gift. Body and soul, understanding and will, strength and health, time and grace. Always and every where, you belong to God ; you are his at all periods, and in all conditions of your life.

To forget this, is to be ruined here and hereafter.

Will you dare to offer to God, at last, the base remnant of a life spent in the service of the world, the flesh, and the devil ?

Ah ! when the time of youth is past, the remains too often are nothing but dregs in the chalice of life.

Young man, remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth. I hate, says the Lord, robbery in a holocaust. (Is. 61 : 8.)

Now, now learn to know God, to fear him, to love him, to serve and to glorify him.

Your heart is not yet like chilled and frozen soil ;—it is fresh and warm, and fit to receive and fructify the good or evil seed that is cast into it.

It is good for a man, when he hath borne the yoke from his youth (Thes. 3 : 27) ; good for him when he has early accustomed himself to keeping God's holy commandments ; and is the master, not the slave, of his own evil passions.

It is a proverb : A young man according to his way, even when he is old, he will not depart from it. (Prov 22 : 6.) The boy is the father of the man.

And when will you provide for the future, if not now ?

Will you possess in old age what you have not gathered in youth ?

Will you dare to sow evil, when you know that he that soweth wind shall reap a whirlwind ? (Osee 8 : 7.)

Know, my friend, that the Church has a claim on you, the state has a claim on you ; grow up for the consolation of the former, and the welfare of the latter.

Human society has a claim on you ; help to save it, help to elevate it.

You owe a duty to yourself ; be true to it ; lay now the foundations of your future happiness and usefulness.

Young man,—noble heart, fresh heart, heart capable of the most sublime aspirations—the paths of justice lie open before you ! Hasten to enter upon them, and tread them courageously to the end. A grand prospect stretches before you. Strive for the highest, the best !

You were not created to crawl upon the earth, to have your affections fixed upon dust, and slime, and smoke. You are born for greater things than earthly riches, pleasures, and honors.

Do not abuse your time of youth—a time so precious, so beautiful, so full of fateful consequences,—a time which is, perhaps, the only time allotted you,—the spring-time, which may never be followed in your case, by either summer or autumn.

If, up to the present hour, you have not sufficiently appreciated it—if you have allowed the precious season to glide away in idleness, and sinful pleasures—oh, then, suffer grace to renew your youth like the eagle's. (Ps. 102 : 5.) Yes, plume your feathers afresh, extend your wings and fly forth into the boundless realm of genuine greatness and happiness,—up to the glittering Sun of Eternal Truth, Beauty, and Justice !

3.

LIFE IS EARNEST.

"*Great labor is created for all men and a heavy yoke is upon the children of Adam.*" (Ecclus. 40 : 1.)

Be not deceived, young man, by your wild companions.

Taught by faith, take life in its full, earnest meaning. Yes, life is earnest. Who can realize the importance and value of each passing moment ?

Contemplate this life in itself.

How short ! how miserable ! how frail is life !

Man, born of a woman, lives for a short time, and this short time is filled with many miseries. Like a flower he comes forth, and is soon destroyed, fleeting like a shadow in his existence, and he never continues in the same state. (Job 14 : 1.)

But what is life in its relations to God ?

Whence come you ?

Has chance or accident placed you in this world ?

There is no chance. A supreme, an all-governing Being is the necessary and consciously-operating Cause of all.

Where were you twenty years ago ?

Did you make yourself ?

Oh ! unparalleled folly ! Nothing acts, before it exists.

Whence then are you ? Who are you ?

You are the work of God's hands.

God spoke an almighty "Fiat," and you were created. Your body was made, your soul was breathed into it, both were intimately united, and you were called man, and became a dweller on this earth.

Thus were made by God your parents, the authors of your earthly existence. And so on and on to Malaleel who was of Cainan, who was of Henos, who was of Seth, who was of Adam, who was of God. (Luke 3 : 37, 38.)

God had a purpose in creating you. The uncreated Wisdom can never act without an end or object. He made you for himself ; for he alone can be the end and object of his own divine operations.

You are made by God for God. What else does this mean, but that, here below, you are to praise God, glorify him, and serve him ?

Noble task ! glorious labor ! Occupation every way most worthy of a creature,—imperative duty which all the children of Adam must fulfil ! No man can shun this labor, or omit this duty ; God's dominion extends over all ;

from the king to the beggar, from the queen to the lowest slave, all have the same duty, the same destiny.

Once more, how serious is this business of life.

Say to yourself, young man : I am not here to enjoy ease, comfort, to revel in amusements, to heap up riches or win renown.

I am a traveler, who may not loiter on my way.

The service of God is my immediate end ; God himself, my last end.

Whither do I go ?

I am going into the house of my eternity.

The day shall come, when this cherished wall of flesh will be broken down, and I shall enter into the securely-walled spaces of eternity. (Is. 38 : 12.)

Here, on earth, I have no lasting city. (Hebr. 13 : 14.) The limitless eternity, towards which I am hastening, is my true home, my final rest.

Solemn reflection ! From God—for God—to God !

O that I would rightly comprehend it ! By no means would it sadden my young spirit, or throw shadows over my bright and gladsome youth. If God is the only and infinite Source of happiness, shall I find any real joy apart from him ? Shall I seek it where it does not exist ?

Fair as a brilliant mirror is that future which is undimmed by any mist of sin, unobscured by any fear of inevitable punishment !

Pure and clear the past, over which no night of guilt, no cloud of unpleasant remembrances brood !

Cheerful and peaceful the present through which I pass with mine eyes fixed earnestly upon the end !

My God, my origin, aim, and end,—my greatest and most generous Benefactor, my rewarder and reward, my Lord and my All—here and hereafter,—I give myself entirely to thee !

I shall enter into the sanctuary of the knowledge and the love of God. I will go to God, who giveth joy to my youth. (Ps. 42 : 4.)

4.

THE SOUL.

"*What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*"
(Matt. 16 : 26.)

Do you maintain that nothing exists except what can be seen, heard, touched, or otherwise perceived by the senses? What folly!

Lo! there is in us a something wholly imperceptible to the senses, of whose existence we are fully conscious, whose effects we clearly perceive.

You think, you judge, you will, you choose; these are the faculties of a spiritual essence.

Hence, your garment of flesh veils something that is nobler than its own frail material,—something spiritual, self-acting, self-conscious, self-ordaining.

Holy breath of God! (Gen. 2 : 7.) Likeness of the Triune Deity! Heaven-born essence! Soul of man, thou art an imperishable treasure, the highest gift of the omnipotent and all-merciful Creator!

What is the body, this house of clay (Job 4 : 19), in comparison with the soul? What are the bodies of all men, even the strongest, the healthiest, the most shapely, the most beautiful, compared with one soul?

What is the whole universe, its riches, its honors, its delights,—what are the heavenly bodies, the sun, moon, and stars, compared with one immortal soul !

And yet, I possess this supreme good, this priceless treasure !

Fool that I am ! I esteem only that which glitters and sparkles, which sounds well, smells and tastes well, which gratifies my senses, and satisfies my vile animal passions.

I wear myself out for money and earthly goods, for honors, for amusements, but as to my soul, far from valuing it, I neglect, abuse—yea, I even destroy it by my sins.

Verily, when man was in honor, he did not understand ; he reduced himself senseless, to the level of beasts, and is become like to them. (Ps. 48 : 13.)

Look at that corpse! How hideous it is—how repulsive ! No warmth, no motion. All is cold, stiff and livid,—and why ? Because with the soul has departed from it all beauty, all grace, all life.

Give it back, if you will, a mere animal life—a life devoid of thought, will, intelligence, a rational spirit : let instinct, and not self-government, prevail—alas ! what a miserable existence is this !

Gold, silver, and precious stones may sparkle and glitter with exceeding splendor—but the Christian soul despises them all ;—it tramples upon them, and casts them from it as so much dust. It is above all earthly treasures,—it needs them not.

Even the body which in our present state is so essential to us,—is an object of contempt. The soul treats it as a slave, rejoices at its dissolution. A crown and sceptred queen—the soul is man's most excellent, most pure and noble part ; she is the body's true and rightful mistress. Subject to corruption and decay, the flesh cries out to the worms : Ye are my brethren ! (Jer. 17 : 14.) And to itself it says ;

Dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return. (Gen. 3 : 19.)

Sublime, indescribable prerogative of the spirit ! Excellent, glorious point of union with the higher world, even with God himself, the only uncreated, supreme Spirit !

I have an immortal soul.

Therefore, death does not end everything. I carry an eternity within myself ;—my soul shall soar above the grave into which my body shall, one day, be cast.

Now I begin to understand the question of the world's Redeemer: What shall a man give in exchange for his soul? (Matt. 16 : 26.)

Weigh an immortal soul in the balance with the best and rarest of perishable goods, and behold, it will infinitely outweigh the universe !

Now, I understand how to appreciate the sweat, the tears and the blood of a God-Man. I understand Bethlehem, Nazareth, Gethsemane, Golgotha. I understand the Crucifix, the Church, the Sacraments,—all the efforts of a God to redeem immortal souls !

I understand now the envy of hell and of its raging demons.

Now, I also understand myself better—this restlessness and uneasiness,—this craving of my whole being, this yearning of my heart after happiness, happiness without limit, my spirit's desire for the infinite —the boundless !

Truly, O God, thou hast created me for thyself alone, and my heart can never rest, until it has found repose in thee !

O young man, learn early the value of your soul—before the world whispers to you its false, but alluring, maxims, before your eyes are blinded by the glitter of its vanities. Young as you are, begin now to be solicitous for your eternal interests ; and defer not so sacred a duty to the uncertain future. By so doing, you only place your salvation in

greater danger, and shorten the time allotted you by God wherein to make preparation for a happy eternity.

5.

ONE THING IS NECESSARY.

"*Fear God, and keep his commandments : for this is all man.*"
(Eccles. 12 : 13.)

Young man, you have an immortal soul. This soul is your soul ; your only soul.

You must save this one immortal soul ; it is necessary.

We have been placed in this world by the Creator for no other purpose but to serve him.

This is our duty of duties—the most urgent—the most unintermitting. All other duties are subordinate to this ; there can be no greater obligation or necessity than that of serving God. Even he, the Lord, cannot free us from an obligation which is born of his, as well as of our own, essence.

Why, then, O rational creature ! are you wholly immersed in worldly affairs ? You have not time even to think of your soul's salvation, much less bestow upon it the care its vital importance demands. Now one business-concern absorbs your attention ; now, another. Always busy, never idle, ever in anxiety and turmoil. Why, and for what end ?

To become rich ? To become learned ? To win honor

and reputation? To enjoy good health? To live long? Perhaps, it is possible—such may be the designs of Divine Providence. Certain it is, however, that God requires that you love and serve him; whether yoube rich or poor, high or lowly, young or old, he has destined you for heaven. You must save your soul.

Many other things may be good, beautiful, useful, pleasant, honorable, and even important; but the salvation of your soul is all this and a great deal more, for it, alone, is necessary.

And now, young man, measuring with the eyes of faith your possible future, counting the years that may possibly yet be yours, will there ever come a day when this thing will cease to be necessary, when this duty will admit of interruption or delay?

Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is all man (Eccles. 12 : 13),—this is the sole business and duty of God's rational creatures. This belongs to their very nature as human beings:—they have to fear God, love and serve him and thereby to save their souls.

Therefore, lay aside altogether or discreetly moderate your eager aspirations for that which is, after all, of little value,—the earthly, the temporal. Be prudent, be circumspect with regard to an affair of infinite importance. An offense against this counsel of faith and reason would draw after it the most dreadful consequences.

What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? (Matt. 16 : 26.)

Remember well: but one thing is necessary (Luke 10 : 49); and that, it profits nothing to gain the whole world and suffer the loss of your soul. How criminally vain and foolish it is for a trifle, for a handful of money, a phantom of honor, a momentary pleasure, to make one's self miserable for eternity!

On the contrary, what does it matter if you lose the whole world, provided you save your soul. An Alexander may rule over the kingdoms of the earth and the glory of them—a Vanderbilt may amass countless treasures of gold, and silver, and precious stones—statesmen may rejoice in fame and unexampled honors—libertines may revel in the wildest pleasures, the most seductive amusements—whilst you are misunderstood, despised, mocked at, trampled down—deprived of food, clothing, fuel,—a sufferer in a hospital, an innocent victim, perchance, in prison! But if all these favored ones whom the world calls happy perish for ever in the midst of their riches, honors, and pleasures, whilst you have saved your soul in poverty, suffering, and humiliation—who is the best off in the end? He laughs best who laughs last.

If the soul is saved, all is saved. Heaven is gained,—God is gained,—and gained for ever more!

6.

THE STRAIT WAY.

"*How narrow is the gate, and strait is the way, which leadeth to life, and few there are who find it.*" (Matt. 7 : 14.)

Two paths lead to the future life; one, the way of justice, of obedience to the dictates of reason and revelation; the other, the way of sin, of natural inclinations and unruly passions.

It is easy to see which of the two is the straight, the roughest, and the least-trodden.

Reason and religion alike curb sensual nature, put strong bridles on "the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life." (1. John. 2 : 16.)

It is hard and tiresome to travel up steep, rough mountains, to work one's way through rugged rocks and sharp briers. With great pain and difficulty do we climb to the summit of the mountain of God. Moreover, what powerful and treacherous foes continually lie in wait for us— the world and Satan.

I must work out my salvation. I must win it by declining from evil, and doing good. (Ps. 6 : 27.)

But all the propensities of my nature are evil, and its corrupt inclinations keep me from the good which I should practise.

Nature says : Acquire, enjoy, be great and free

God says : Seek first the kingdom of God. (Mt. 6 : 33.) Commit no injustice, no impurity ; Honor thy father and mother and superiors. (Ex. 20: 15, 14, 12.)

Nature abhors all efforts at Christian perfection.

God's precept enjoins : Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Mt. 4 : 48.) The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, says Christ, and only the violent bear it away.

No man can serve two masters. (Mt. 6 : 24.) Whosoever is a friend of the world, is an enemy of God. (St. James 4 : 4.)

O strait way ! O narrow gate, leading to eternal life ! How many walk, how many strive to enter therein !

Whether many or few, you, my friend, can and must be one of them ; for to you, too, are the words addressed : Keep thyself and thy soul carefully. (Deut. 4 : 9.)

Cowardice cries out : It is impossible !

Heed it not. Others have done it, and hence you too can do it. Younger and weaker ones have succeeded,— how then can it be impossible for you ?

Doubt insinuates : Who knows whether or not you belong to the elect ? Even if you try your best, will you really be saved ?

O my friend, live as one of the elect, and you shall surely enjoy the portion of the elect ! By good works one makes sure his vocation and election. (2. Pet. 1 : 10.)

Strait way ! narrow gate !—is there, then, no other path or entrance ? No ! there is no other that leads to life. If thou wilt enter into life, says Christ, keep the commandments. (Mt. 19 : 17.)

Woe to me, if I choose the broad road, made plain with stones. It is free from the rocks and thorns of the heavenward path—but where does it end ? In its end there is hell and darkness and pains. (Ecclus. 21 : 11.)

Ah, go not in the way of ruin (Ecclus. 32 : 25) but accustom your feet, young man, to the rugged, but sure way of virtue and justice, of which it is said, that they are blessed who walk in it. (Ps. 118 : 1.)

And though multitudes rush on in the broad and easy road that leadeth to destruction, heedless of the warning voices that would check their mad career— do you, my dear friend, do you save your soul and walk courageously in the company of Christ and the Saints, through the narrow gate, and along the straight way, to Paradise : Persevere—this way leads to Life !

7.

TRUE HAPPINESS.

"Happy is that people whose God is the Lord."
(Ps. 143 : 15.)

You wish very much to be happy, young man.

And who does not wish to be happy ?

This irresistible desire comes from God ; he has planted it in our hearts.

But body and soul find their happiness in quite different sources.

The soul is the spirit of God. It certainly strives to be united with him, the highest, infinite Good, as the sparks fly upward. The body is made from the slime of the earth, hence, it is constantly drawn to earth and the earthly.

Painful discord ! miserable disunion, begotten of original sin !

Before the fall of Adam, perfect harmony reigned : the soul was subordinate to God, and the body to the soul. Reason and faith must restore this harmony and subordination.

The senses, the body, must be subject to the dominion of the soul ; the soul must obey the will and command of its God.

Man is a being composed of body and soul, and as such has only one end, only one happiness.

Whence come all false ideas of happiness in this world ?

From the wild clamor of the passions, which drowns the voice of reason and conscience, and stifles the cry of the soul for the supernatural.

Why the many-sided evils, the unspeakable misfortunes which prevail on every side?

Because man grasps that which draws him from his end, and seeks gratification in that which is incapable of affording it.

There is only one evil in this world Sin— alienation of our whole being from God ; mistaking our final end, or neglecting the means thereto.

Hence, true happiness is only in God, and nowhere else. In him the creature reposes in his final End, and harmoniously develops and gratifies his principle and essential faculties.

Taken in this light, what is easier than to be happy?

Drop a stone from a height ; and is it any labor for it to fall thousands of fathoms in a few moments?

Is it any labor for a bird to fly, or a fish to swim? All these are in their proper element.

Your element is God : you are created for him. Only give liberty to your heart. It seeks the Infinite—do not keep it chained to the earth, by the fetters of worthless goods and false pleasures.

Happiness begins here below with the knowledge and service of God, with the practice of whatever urges us to the love of God. It is completed above with the vision, fruition and full possession of God.

Learn early, O young man, where true happiness exists. Spare yourself fruitless toil, bitter disappointments, and deep, perhaps, unavailing, repentance.

Happy, happy alone is that people whose God is the Lord. (Ps. 143 : 15.)

But he that forsakes the Lord shall be confounded, he

that departs from him, shall be written in the earth, and withers away because he has forsaken the vein of living water. (Jer. 17 : 12.)

You seek honor, your heart thirsteth after it. It is great glory to follow the Lord. (Ecclus. 23 : 38.)

You seek riches? Thine, O Lord, is magnificence, and power, and glory, and victory : and to thee is praise : for all that is in heaven, and in earth, is thine, thine is the kingdom. Thine are riches, and thine is glory : thou hast dominion over all. (Paralip. 29 : 11, 12.)

You seek joy !—O taste, and see that the Lord is sweet. (Ps. 33 : 9.)

Poor heart, always grasping at a trifle. Behold, God is the ocean ; money, glory, earthly pleasures, are merely drops. Whatever is good, true, and beautiful, is of God, in God, from God.

O the depth of the riches, of the wisdom, and of the knowledge of God !

O inexhaustible treasury of all imaginable happiness ! Thither must you aspire,—there must your hopes and aspirations rest ; this must be the centre towards which your soul with all its powers and faculties is ever attracted.

8.

THE GREATEST EVIL.

"*Know thou, and see, that it is an evil and a bitter thing for thee, to have left the Lord thy God.*" (Jeremiah 2 : 19.)

You long ardently for happiness, for all that can give satisfaction and delight, and yet you do not shun what can

alone render you miserable—you do not avoid the only real evil !

This evil is breach with God—the Author of our being, our Lord, our Benefactor, our Centre and our End.

And this breach is Sin.

If the sin is mortal,—that is, if we sin in a grave matter, with full knowledge, and free consent, our separation from God is complete, and the life of the soul is at once destroyed.

But if the sin is light, or venial, the separation is only threatened ; in this case the soul is not dead, but only wounded, or deceased, more or less.

Sin is a voluntary violation of the divine law,—a thought, a desire, a word, a deed, an omission, wilfully contrary to God's eternal law. The sinner prefers the creature to the Creator, his own will to that of God.

The essence of sin, then, consists in turning from God, and disregarding the dictates of reason, which is given us for a guide, and which urges us to decline from evil and to do good.

But—who is God, from whom we turn by sin ?

He is the Lord our God : and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. (Ps. 94 : 7.)

He has the right to make laws for us, his creatures.

He was even bound to give us laws ; for if God creates a being, he must give it a rule corresponding to its essence. For the rational creature, there is no other except God, the wisest and holiest, the rule of all that is just and good, or rather, Justice and Goodness itself.

And if I, voluntarily, and with knowledge, depart from this rule, what else do I, but say : I will not serve (Jer. 1 : 20) ?

And yet the Lord is so great, so good, so powerful, so holy ! Behold the works of his hands ! Contemplate the

heavens and the earth ! And all obey him. Before him, every knee should bow of those that are in heaven, on earth, and in hell. (Phil. 2 : 10.)

And I—who am I ? True, a richly-endowed, privileged creature,—but after all, only a creature,—frail, mortal, poor, limited, impotent.

Again, who is God ?

My Father, infinitely kind and loving, to whom I owe everything in the order of nature, as well as of grace. What have you that you have not received, or for which you are not indebted to God ? (1. Cor. 4 : 7.)

Even that which I abuse,—the creature,—and that by which I commit the abuse,—my will,—I have from him.

Is he wrong when he utters this touching complaint :—I have brought up my children, and exalted them : but they have despised me ! (Is. 1 : 2)—?

If I am father, where is my honor ; and if I am Lord, where is my fear ?

If my enemy had reviled me, I would verily have borne with it,—but thou, a man of one mind. (Ps. 54 : 13.)

Add to this, that God hates sin,—it is the object of his sole and supreme hatred. He loves everything that he has made, because it is good. Sin is not his work. He hates sin, and must hate it in proportion as he loves himself, for sin seeks his destruction. God, therefore, hates sin essentially, necessarily, infinitely.

Unite yourself with this object of God's abhorrence, ally yourself with this, his bitterest foe, and will you not speedily share in that fatal enmity ?

Yes, sin is rebellion against God, and it is the less pardonable, the more fully the evil-doer is aware that he sins before the face of the omnipotent Deity ; the more clearly he realizes the threats of the All-Just and his power to execute them ; and the better he is acquainted with the goodness

and benignity of him whom he offends.

Yes, sin is ingratitude towards God, and this ingratitude is so much the more base as it exists in a creature drawn from nothingness to partake of the Creator's bliss and glory,—adopted by that gracious Creator as a child, from whom he rightly claims submission and obedience. Know thou, and see, that it is an evil and a bitter thing for thee to have left the Lord thy God (Jer. 2 : 19), the vein of living waters. (Jer. 17 : 13.)

Young man, what says your noble, generous heart to this contumely? You so young—a rebel?—an ingrate?

In the flower of your age, shall you not be a stranger to such perversity?

God is more to you than father and mother.

All the days of thy life, have God in thy mind, and take heed thou never consent to sin, nor transgress the commandment of the Lord our God. (Tob. 4 : 6.)

9.

THE RUIN OF SIN.

"*Flee from sins as from the face of a serpent, for if thou comest near them, they will take hold of thee. The teeth thereof are the teeth of a lion; there is no remedy for the wound thereof.* (Ecclus. 21 : 2, 3.)

Have you ever seriously reflected on the enormity of sin?

Behold, you must learn to know it in its entire repulsiveness; otherwise, you will never conceive a true, decisive hatred for it.

You love the beautiful, and there is nothing more vile and hideous than sin, even considered in itself, apart from the woes and miseries which it generates.

Beauty means union, the right relation and agreement of the form with the being. Sin is separation, discord, disproportion, disorder.

You love the great, the noble. Anything lower, more contemptible, and dishonorable than sin cannot be imagined.

It draws us to creatures, and binds us to them with inseparable ties ; it robs the soul of its heavenly nobility, and effaces therefrom the seal of the child of God.

Theft, perjury, murder, falsehood, adultery, slander, disobedience, impiety—how degrading are these, and all that belongs to them ! How such sins disgrace man even in the eyes of his fellow-creatures, and rob him of honor, reputation, and influence,—in a word, entail upon him the most deplorable misfortunes !

And that heart from which not one, but all of these abominations come forth—what must be the depths of its depravity !

Of the lower animals, most of them have but one prominently bad trait, viz : Envy or deceit ; voracity or impurity ; cruelty, stubbornness, or malice ; but there are many men, who are addicted to several, and perhaps to all these vices ;—how indescribable must be the deformity of their souls !

But sin is not only a foul blot disfiguring the soul, a something very evil in itself ; it also inflicts upon us an injury so great that it is far above our comprehension.

Sin is the worst of robbers.

You are a saint. Prayers, alms, penitential works, victorious combats, sacrifices, sufferings, merits of every sort have been accumulated. Commit but one mortal sin—and you are immediately despoiled of all—all is gone—lost—and if you should die unrepentant—lost for ever !

Perhaps you think ; I am rich, and made wealthy, and have need of nothing—? Alas ! you know not that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. (Apoc. 3 : 17.) The enemy hath put out his hand to all your desirable things. (Lament. 1 : 10.)

All the justice of the just man shall not be remembered, as soon as he has sinned, and if he die in his injustice, he will be lost for ever. (Ezech. 18 : 24.)

In this state can you do anything that would merit a heavenly reward? No ; your state is one of complete barrenness. Two things have come upon you suddenly in one day, barrenness and widowhood. (Is. 49 : 9.) You can bear no fruit until the love of God re-enters your heart, and once more takes entire possession of it. If I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. (1. Cor : 13 : 3.)

Sin robs the heart of all true peace and joy—for it takes from it the blissful assurance of God's friendship. From the moment sin enters a soul, there is darkness, disorder, confusion, chaos.

In vain will you seek to assuage its bitterness with earthly pleasures and sensual delights ; the joy of our heart is ceased ; our dancing is turned into mourning. (Lament. 5 : 15.) Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil. (Rom. 2 : 9.)

Liberty is gone ; for freedom belongs to the children of God, not to the slave of the cruel tyrant Satan ; the sinner is the servant of a hard, domineering world ; the toy of capricious passions. The soul lies in chains, and often the body shares her captivity, an unwilling instrument of abominable desires.

How is the mistress of the Gentiles become as a widow, the princess of provinces made tributary ! (Lament. 1 : 1.)

And if you die in sin, there is no heaven, no God, no salvation for you! Every right and claim to them is lost.

Sin separates.

It separates from whatever is good.

It separates the sinner, although in an invisible manner, from all good men, who walk in other ways and strive for another end; from all creatures, in whose choir of praise, the voice of the sinner is a perpetual discord.

It separates from God; for what concord hath Christ with Belial? (2. Cor. 6 : 15.) The way of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord. (Prov. 15 : 9.) The Lord is far from the wicked. (Prov. 15 : 29.)

All the ties that bound me to my Creator are severed, a wide, deep gulf lies between us.

Sin is a murderer.

As the soul animates the body, so divine grace gives life to the soul. Mortal sin banishes grace from the soul —hence the latter dies.

From the daughter of Sion all her beauty is departed. (Lament. 1 : 6.)

A dead body—how disgusting, how appalling! A dead soul—who can imagine or describe its frightful appearance!

And with this hideous corpse of a soul, I am content to live for months and years! Yes, the wages of sin is death, (Rom. 6 : 23)—the death of the soul in this life, and, in the future, endless life—a second, eternal death, from which there is no resurrection.—Woe to the sinful nation! a people laden with iniquities, a wicked seed, ungracious children: they have forsaken the Lord, they have blasphemed the Holy One of Israel, they have gone away backwards. (Is. 1 : 4.)

Do you comprehend now, why sin is the greatest and the only evil?

Is not the sacred Scripture right when it says: Justice

makes the nations great, but sin makes them miserable? and: He that loveth iniquity hateth his own soul? (Ps. 10: 6.)

And—already in your outh—you have fallen a prey to this enormous evil, to this monster—Sin? You have delivered your young soul to the teeth of this dragon of destruction?

Young man, flee from sin as from the face of a serpent! Come not near it, otherwise it will seize you; the teeth thereof are the teeth of a lion. It throttles men, wounds them, and there is no remedy for the wounds thereof. (Ecclus. 21: 2, 3.)

10.

THE RAVAGES OF SIN.

"*Say not: How mighty am I? and who shall bring me under for my deeds? for God will surely take revenge.*" (Ecclus. 5: 3.)

Has it, perchance, ever come into your mind to say: I have sinned, and what harm has befallen me! (Ecclus. 5: 4.) Shall levity dare to make objections in the very face of sin?

O how quickly would you grow dumb, if you would but cast a steady glance at the facts, as faith and the history of the world present them to your view!

The Lord created numberless hosts of wise, beautiful,

powerful spirits, destined not only to adore, serve, and praise him, but to be happy with him for ever. But all did not persevere in the time of trial. A great number of those sublime creatures, through the sin of pride, plunged themselves into perdition.

No sooner had they yielded consent to a sinful thought than their awful punishment followed. Lucifer and all his satellites fell from heaven (Luke 10 : 18) ; and the abyss of hell which was then created, became their terrible and everlasting prison. For God spared not the angels that sinned, but having cast them down into the place of torments, delivered them into the chains of hell to be tormented. (2. Peter 2 : 5.)

O just God !—what a change ! Those once beautiful angels are now called demons, and all that is evil, deformed, and execrable, is united in them.

This fearful change was caused by one sin of thought.

What must sin be, when a God who is charity itself (as the Apostle tells us), punishes it thus in his own noble and glorious creatures !

Two beings—Adam and Eve—came forth pure and holy from the creative hand of God.

The understanding illumined by the light of eternal knowledge,—the will still moving in perfect harmony with that of the Most High ; the flesh subordinate to the spirit, intimate converse with God, sojourn in the charming Garden of Eden, and if they had remained faithful, immutability, immortality—what a state of felicity !

But, like the fallen angels, Adam and Eve could not stand the test to which their Creator subjected them. Through the malice and snares of Satan, they violated the light precept imposed upon them, and thus brought upon themselves, in their turn, eternal ruin and misery.

The noble powers of the soul were weakened and im-

paired. She could no longer reign mistress over the body which now became rebellious, averse to all good, and filled with the deadly poison of concupiscence.

Behold, now, the fearful consequences : Poverty, distress, countless forms of disease, hunger, toil, war, discord, treason, murder—all the manifold miseries of life, and at length—Death ! May not this earth well be called a valley of tears ?

All this was the punishment of one sin. A severe, but just punishment. Justice is the girdle of his loins. (Is. 11 : 5.) His justice is justice for ever : and his law is truth. (Ps. 118 : 142.)

If the chastisement is great, the guilt is surely still greater, since even in God's chastisements love and mercy are mingled.

And is it not very probable that in hell there is more than one damned soul, brought thither by a single mortal sin ?

How many boys, how many young men had, perhaps, just committed their first mortal sin, when death snatched them away, and without mercy, delivered them to the justice of God ! That shameful deed had just been one, the lily-white flower of innocence had just been stained ; the blush, perhaps, had not yet departed from the young cheek, the timid, shy, guilty heart yet beat perhaps with rapid pulses,—when lo ! in the very act, the young sinner was summoned to the tribunal of God, and surprised by the awful question : Where is thy brother Abel ? (Gen. 4 : 9.) Where is thy innocence ? Behold, the blood of the murdered cries to me from the earth !

Still more certain it is that many, very many, who have not committed as many mortal sins as you have, are now languishing and suffering in the prisons of divine justice. And what are the pains which they suffer ?

Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what God hath prepared for them that hate him and offend him by sin. What an utter lack of all good! What an accumulation of all evils! And all without end!

Do you perceive, now, what Sin is? Is it really a trifle, as you sometimes persuade yourself in your levity and blindness?

Oh, what madness to say: I have sinned and what harm hath befallen me? (Ecclus. 5 : 4.) The time may come when you will realize the truth of what the Scripture adds: The Most High is a patient rewarder; he will surely take revenge. (Ecclus. 5 : 4, 3.)

Take heed—sooner or later punishment will overtake you. The arm of the Lord is not shortened. I myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand, and with a strong arm, and in fury and in indignation, and in great wrath, says the Lord. (Jer. 21 : 5.)

Remember the terrible Deluge which once overwhelmed the earth, and washed it clean from the crimes of guilty men.

Think of the fiery rain which destroyed Sodom, Gomorrah, and the other cities, theatres of unnatural sins of the flesh.

Forget not the ungrateful children of Israel, whom the numberless miracles and benefits of the Almighty could not win to his love and service. You know the terrible chastisements which their repeated defections drew upon them. The years of wandering in the desert,—the avenging sword, the loss of the Ark of the covenant,—the wrath of the Philistines,—the tyranny of domestic princes,—Nebuchodonosor, Antiochus, Titus,—the destruction of Jerusalem,—the dispersion, yea, the rejection of that entire, faithless race,—such were the ways in which the divine

wrath was poured out, and the justice of the Lord satisfied upon these bold transgressors of his law.

O Sin, I begin to see you in your true light.

I have sinned. I have done unjustly ; I have committed wickedness. (3. Kings 8 : 47.) Hear me from heaven. Spare my people (Joel 2 : 17) who have sinned against thee and let them find mercy !

11.

SIN AND THE CROSS.

"*He was wounded for our iniquities, and was bruised for our sins.*" (Ps. 53 : 5.)

Do you ever contemplate the crucifix ? The cross—a divine Sufferer thereon—cruel nails,—deep, horrible wounds !

Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, bleeding, agonizing, abandoned by all, submits to death, and offers up that life which has been one of unceasing sacrifice.

You call Jesus your Redeemer. To redeem you from sin, the Son of God came down upon earth, taking upon himself the nature of man ;—for you he lived, taught, worked, suffered, and died.

And could none but a God-Man blot out your sins and those of the world ? No ; an offense against the Infinite demands an infinite satisfaction.

Therefore, only an incarnate God could free you from the guilt of original and actual sin

Sin, then, is the sole cause of the sacrificial life and death of Christ.

He was wounded for our iniquities and bruised for our sins. (Is. 53 : 5.) The Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all. (Is. 53 : 6.)

He hath delivered himself unto death and was reputed with the wicked ; and hath borne the sins of many, and hath prayed for the transgressors. (Is. 53 : 12.)

He delivered himself to him who judged him unjustly : who his own self bore our sins in his body on the tree ; that we being dead to sins, should live to justice ; by whose stripes you were healed. (1. Pet. 2 : 23, 24.)

Yes, sin is the cause of Jesus dying on the cross ; had sin not been committed, his sufferings and death would not be necessary, nor would they ever have taken place.

Upon the shoulders of this guiltless Lamb of God, rested the sins of all ages and of all nations.

We are accustomed to ascribe the Passion and death of Jesus solely to the malice of the Jews ; but they were merely instruments, though, indeed, guilty ones It was the invisible arm of God's justice that punished sin in his divine Son.

Him who knew no sin, he hath made sin for us. He has made him to be a sin-offering, a victim of expiation, on whom he avenges himself, that we might be made the justice of God in him. (2. Cor. 5 : 21.)

O, youthful sinner, here behold God's judgments on sin ! See, what it merits at his hands, what it has cost his only-begotten Son ! Reflect seriously upon it : it may cause you to turn from your vicious courses.

But, we have not yet unfolded all the malice of sin. By sin, you renew the Passion and death of Jesus on the cross.

You efface, and annul, so to speak, the hand-writing of

your redemption. True, Christ, rising from the dead, dieth now no more; death, no more, hath dominion over him (Rom. 6 : 9); but if he had not already died, it would be necessary for him to die once more for your sake.

Your guilt can only be washed out by Christ's atoning blood.

Young man, I hear you exclaim :

O my Jesus, infatuated being that I am, can I be heartless enough to betray thee, to drag thee bound from tribunal to tribunal, from Annas to Caiphas, from Pilate to Herod, to mock thee, to scourge thee, to crown thee with thorns, to prefer Barabbas to thee, to load thee with the heavy cross, to fasten thee thereon, piercing thy hands and feet with nails, and thy side with a lance?

Are you, then, in earnest?—Yes, you reply, never again do I intend to be guilty of these crimes. Never again will I slay my God and my Redeemer! What! do you not recognize this terrible truth? Your pride, your intemperance, your impurity, your spirit of falsehood, your sloth, your desire for revenge, your forgetfulness of God—these are the executioners of Jesus, by means of these you imbue your hands in the blood of the Son of God.

And—worst and most awful consequence of all—so far as you are concerned, you totally frustrate the grand end for which Christ shed his blood. Yea, the blood of the Saviour becomes the cause of your eternal damnation, the cross of Christ arises as a witness against you. (Heb. 6 : 6.)

If the blood of the Lamb of God does not heal, it poisons; and if we prevent it from shedding upon us a blessing, it falls upon our guilty heads as a curse.

Thus it happened to the Jews when they cried out : His blood be upon us and upon our children. (Matt. 27 : 25.)

When we sin, we despise grace, and the price of this despised grace is the blood of Jesus Christ; therefore, we

contemn, we dishonor, and trample under foot that blood of infinite value.

Horrible thought ! To trample on the blood of Christ ! (Heb. 10 : 29.) But what if it be not only dishonored, but in a certain sense degraded even unto hell ?

Awful truth ! In the reprobate, Satan, as it were, triumphs over the blood of Christ ; for it adheres to every redeemed soul, and in those who fall a prey to hell, the demon mocks, and will mock for all eternity, God, his omnipotence, his goodness—Jesus, his Passion, his death, his blood !

The Cross and Sin ! how mysterious, yet how clear, their reciprocal relation !

And now, dear young man, you have taken a brief glance at the work of your Redemption : do you not yet understand Sin ? Oh, then, your heart is harder than the rocks that were rent ;—more insensible than the dead who arose from their graves at the death of the God-Man !

The words of the divine Sufferer are, indeed, applicable to you ; Weep not over me ; but for yourselves (Luke 23 : 28) ; and again : For if in the green wood they do these things, what shall they do in the dry ? (Luke 23 : 31.)

12.

DESECRATED YOUTH.

"*His bones shall be filled with the vices of his youth ; and they shall sleep with him in the dust.*" (Job 20 : 11.)

Is it not sad to see a young man, in the bloom of his years, resembling a tree—without bud, leaf, or any promise of fruit ?

The fresh foliage is gone, the graceful boughs are bent and withered ; the birds refuse to sing upon the leafless branches—there is no more shade to refresh the weary traveler.

Wasted, misspent youth, innocence early lost, violent, precociously awakened passions, evil habits which have already taken deep root in the young perverted heart !

The cruel world aims its most fatal darts at the soul of the young, well knowing how full of evil consequences is the career of that man whose spiritual life has been smothered in the germ, or, at least blighted and checked.

What are the fruits of this early captivity to vice, or to the spirit of the world ?

Sins of disobedience, of rebellion against parents and superiors.

Sins against the divine honor and worship—scepticism, unbelief, forgetfulness of God ; no prayer, lukewarm prayer, irreverence in holy places, disrespect for holy things, disgust for the word of God, neglect and abuse of the Sacraments.

Sins of hidden lust, and unbridled licentiousness ; pollution of the youthful imagination, prostitution of the youthful memory, profanation of the youthful body, waste of the youthful faculties. Dark, pestilence-breathing, bottomless abyss ! Ignominy beyond all conception ? Day tells to day, and night to night, the dreadful story of its shame.

Sins of excess in eating and drinking, nights spent in gambling hells, theatres, saloons, contempt of everything noble, pure, and spiritual.

Sins of sloth, neglect of the duties of one's state in life, aversion to labor, waste of time, unlimited recreation and rest, rage for light and pernicious reading, rage for vain amusements, want of earnestness.

Sins of avarice ; unfaithfulness, cheating, squandering, theft.

Sins of vanity, presumption, pride of talents, of pedigree, of money ; desire of ruling, ill-directed love of liberty, intractableness, impatience of every restraint.

Sins of uncharitableness, mistaking the rights of one's fellow-men, envy, quarrelsomeness, bitterness, discord, hatred, implacability.

And if you were to die this moment, the years of manhood and age on which you have counted not being given you—so young—and the prey of hell !

And if you are permitted to live to mature years, a great part of your lifetime on earth is lost after all. And is there not every prospect that the future years will correspond with the unhappy past ? Will not your bones be filled with the vices of your youth ? And will these not hold your heart enthralled until it is cold in the grave ?

O how hard it is to turn back, when we have once begun to tread the downward, easy path !

Why did you permit yourself to be lured on thus far ? Why did you not heed the voice of conscience before now and choose better ways ?

Poor heart ! desolate heart, thou must return to thy God ! The valley must be filled up—not with the enjoyments of the senses, or any of those false delights which the world bestows on its votaries, not with those sensual gratifications or passionate desires which have slain the life of thy soul—but with the immortal, spiritual, holy, chaste things of God !

Cry out in the bitterness of your heart :

O God of my youth, from whom I have had the misfortune so soon to stray—what have I become without thee ?

I have forsaken thee, the fountain of living water, and have dug to myself cisterns that can hold no water. (Jeremiah 2 : 13 .)

I have cast myself down beside the troubled streams of Egypt and their impure floods have excited rather than slackened my thirst.

Pure fountain of life ! (Ps. 35 : 10.) Who will lead me back to thee, O God, that joy may again be given to my youth ? (Ps. 42 : 4.)

And the rest of the flowering time of my life, to .whom else shall it be dedicated, if not to thee, the God of my heart and the God that is my portion for ever ? (Ps. 72 :2 6)

13.

HELL.

"*They spend their days in wealth and in a moment they go to hell.*" (Job 21 : 13.)

Only the fool says in his heart : There is no hell ; it is the same that says : There is no God. (Ps. 13 : 1.)

Young man, there is a hell, a deep and horrible hell; and he who says there is not, is too much of a coward to extricate himself from the mire of vice. Conscious of his guilt, he fears the vengeance of the God of justice ; and, dreading the eternal torments which await the sinner, he tries to persuade himself and others that there is no hell.

Vain endeavor ! Hell exists, and shall exist, for ever. Otherwise, when and where would Sin meet its full retribution ?

Is not God just as well as merciful ? All the Divine attributes are equally perfect, equally infinite.

The meek and lowly Jesus, the benign uncreated Truth, who can neither deceive nor be deceived—he, himself, has uttered these terrible words :

There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Mt. 8 : 12.)

There their worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished. (Mark 9 : 43.)

Let him be cast out into exterior darkness. (Matt. 25 : 30.)

Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire. (Mt. 25 : 41.)

Fifteen times does Jesus speak in the Gospel of this everlasting fire.

And do you not hear the rich glutton exclaim : I am tormented in a flame ? and again : Father Abraham, between us and you there is fixed a great chaos, over which I cannot pass. (Luke 16 : 24-26.)

Yes, the night cometh when no man can work. (John 9 : 4.) No more time (Apoc. 10 : 6), therefore, no more repentance. In what place soever the tree shall fall, there shall it lie. (Ecclus. 11 : 3.) They spend their days in luxury, and in a moment they go down to hell. (Job 21 : 13.)

And ah ! what a dreadful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God. (Hebr. 10 : 31.)

Devouring fire, kindled by God's just wrath ! fire, created only for the torment of the sinner and the execution of God's inexorable judgments !

Restless fire! Ever-burning, never-consuming flame ! Fire in the entrails, fire in the bones and limbs, fire in the veins, fire in the senses fire, in the heart—a pool of fire. (Apoc. 20 : 9.)

Which of you shall dwell with devouring fire ? Which of you shall dwell with everlasting burnings ? (Is. 33 : 14.)

Insatiable, never-resting worm ! eternally gnawing conscience ; the viper's tongue that kills for ever. (Job 20 : 16.)

I could have escaped these flames, cries out the lost soul

—I should have escaped them ! how many blessed means were once mine—how many graces and powerful aids—how much time for conversion and repentance !

Terrible darkness. The sun of grace has set, eternal light is extinguished. Dark night on which dawn shall never break !

Without God—for all eternity !

Depart from me ! (Mt. 25 : 41.) Depart from God—from light—life—truth—wealth—beauty !

Gone are all creatures with their miserable consolations; vanished is the world with all its tinsel goods ;—and yet it is our strongest instinct to enjoy, to love, to possess even limitless happiness—for this we were created. All that, hitherto, gave delight and transient joy is gone for ever, and the only Good that could satisfy the ceaseless craving, the insatiable desires of the heart—do we seek the faintest rays of his glory, the smallest gleam of his matchless loveliness ? Alas, they shall never more break upon the darkness of our eternal prison !

Depart from me !—You are not my people, and I will not be yours. (Osee 1 : 9.)

Without God ! Therefore eternally aimless—eternally hungering, eternally thirsting, eternally groping in the dark, eternally poor, eternally orphaned, eternally loveless, eternally miserable !

Well do they merit even this awful fate, who during life have said to God : Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. (Job 21 : 14.)

Thou art just, O Lord : and thy judgment is right. (Ps. 118 : 137.)

Depart from us ? . . . Depart from me, ye cursed !

Total separation from all that could give comfort, joy, or peace ! State of the most profound misery, of everlasting horror !

And whoever has committed but one mortal sin, is in danger of this hell with its fire, its worm, its darkness.

If but one mortal sin be on your soul when your thread of life breaks, you are lost for ever!

One mortal sin,—one hell; a thousand mortal sins,—a thousand hells! The torments, remorse, and misery of the damned soul corresponds to its guilt.

A hell awaits the proud, a hell awaits the covetous, a hell awaits the unchaste, a hell awaits the disobedient, a hell awaits the idler, the liar, the slanderer, the calumniator, the blasphemer, the thief.

Every one shall be punished for all that he did; according to the multitude and diversity of his devices, he shall suffer (Job. 20 : 18.)

And how many youthful prisoners are immured in these dismal dungeons!

O God, a child in hell A boy in hell?—a young man in hell?—In hell among devils, among malefactors of every sort,—murderers, adulterers, dogs of impurity (Ap. 22 : 15), idolaters, perjurers—the outcasts of all times, of all places, of all states, of all ages?—One mortal sin may have brought that miserable child, that wretched boy, that hapless young man, to this infamous abode, to the companionship of these terrible demons and reprobate souls!

He was, perhaps, still cherished by many hearts, he enjoyed the friendship and respect of all, his noble qualities gave promise of a beautiful, useful manhood.

Now he is in hell—and for ever! Thou art terrible, and who shall resist thee? (Ps. 75 : 8.)

Spare, O Lord, spare thy people! (Joel 2 : 17.) Here burn, here cut—but spare me in eternity! (St. Augustine.)

14.

ETERNITY.

"*Man shall go into the house of his eternity.*" (Eccles. 12 : 5.)

O Eternity, Eternity ! Inscrutable mystery ! Unsearchable depths ! Immeasurable distance ! Unapproachable inaccessible height !

Behold, my friend, an ocean without a resting place or shore, a day without a close, a night without a morning ! Let fall thy plummet into space—and shudder. It is an abyss without a bottom.

Thousands of years, millions of years—what a weary time ! But time measures not eternity.—Continual beginning—uninterrupted, never-ending course of time—a circle without beginning—a chain without end—a river that constantly empties into its source.

But, at least, in this eternity there is change, there is variation ? No : everything is fixed and stable. Everlasting wealth, or everlasting poverty ; everlasting honor or everlasting disgrace ; everlasting happiness, or everlasting misery.

They shall reign for ever and ever. (Apoc. 22 : 5.)

They shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. (Apoc. 20 : 10.)

No decrease of felicity, no diminution of pain. The same everlasting joy,—the same eternal punishment. What bliss ! what torment !

And every moment of eternity bears up the entire delight, or entire torment of the whole !

Christ has taught us these truths, and he has said : Heaven and earth shall pass away ; but my word shall not pass away. (Mt. 24 : 35.)

What is wiser than this ? Could God, without infringing on our liberty, lead you more effectually to your end, than by proposing an eternal heaven on the one hand, an eternal hell on the other ? In a certain measure he thus rendered it impossible for you, a rational creature, even to waver in your choice He hath set water and fire before thee, stretch forth thy hand to which thou wilt. (Ecclus. 15 : 17.)

What is more in accordance with nature ? At the moment of death your will was averted from God ; hence it remains averted for ever—the conditions of eternity being immutable and irreparable. After death, repentance is impossible. Opportunities of grace and repentance cease with a man's last breath.

What is more just ? Sin is an offense against an infinite Being, deserving of an infinite punishment ; but since, for a finite creature, its consequences can only be infinite in duration, the punishment of hell is a never-ending one, and its exterior darkness (Mt. 8 : 21) one which can never admit the faintest ray of light. Be not deceived : Great and terrible is God (Ps. 88 : 8) in the works of his justice.

And the blood of Christ,—is it not of infinite value ? Yes : and hence its profanation by sin can only be atoned for by an infinite punishment. For ever it cries to heaven for vengeance on the sinner, for ever it keeps alive the fire of God's wrath against him.

We do not comprehend hell, because we do not comprehend the infinite majesty of God ; consequently we neither comprehend sin nor the punishment due to it.

Awful thought ! for ever bereft of happiness ! for ever overwhelmed with misery !

And shall we find there no ray of hope ? No. If we did, hell would cease to be hell. Its eternity is the special characteristic of hell.

And now reflect, young man : A brief enjoyment—an eternal punishment ; a moment's unlawful pleasure—an eternity of pain ! A few years of fleeting away in the wild intoxication of the senses—immovable imprisonment in the dungeon of eternal retribution !

O how this thought should strengthen us in time of temptation ! But though even a feeble faith presents it to the mind of the young, the riotous excess of the passions drives it away. Even the penetrating rays of the sun are excluded. The eyes of the spirit are either obscured, or violently riveted upon the earth. The things of the flesh, the trivial amusements of the present moment,—beyond these, you see nothing. No wonder then that your actions are stamped with the seal of mutability and decay, and not with the signet of the Eternal King,—the immutable, the imperishable.

Man shall go into the house of his eternity. (Ecclus. 12 : 5.)

Narrow heart ! why seek not now to enlarge yourself to the measure of that eternity you are one day destined to inhabit ?

How long will ye be dull of heart ? Why do ye love vanity and seek after lying ? (Ps. 4 : 3.) Why do you suffer yourself to be allured by the Will-o-the-wisp of the present, losing sight of the grand fixed planets, the lights of the heavenly, Eternal City ?

15

THE HOLY FEAR OF GOD.

"*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.*"
(Ecclus. 1 : 16.)

Great is the Lord (Ps. 47 : 2), infinitely great, the Creator of all things; the Lord of all beings :—infinite in all his perfections—in majesty and glory, in holiness and goodness, in power and wisdom, in justice and mildness. He alone is of himself, he alone the adorable, the most amiable, the highest, the best: Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and of his greatness there is no end. (Ps. 144 : 3.)

There is none like to thee, O Lord : thou art great, and great is thy name in might. Who shall not fear thee, O King of nations? (Jer. 10 : 6, 7.)

By virte of his nature, God must reward the good and punish the wicked; he must render to every one according to his works. (Romans 2 : 6.)

God is just and equitable in his ordinances. He punishes without respect to person or state; no appearance blinds, no flattery bribes him; there is no respect of persons with him. (Ephes. 6 : 9.) He may often withhold his chastisements during time, but it is only to inflict them the more surely and terribly in eternity.

He has commanded us to avoid evil and to do good. He gives emphasis to his commandments by promises and

threats. Will he not fulfil his promises and execute his threats ? I am the Lord and I change not. (Malach. 3 : 6.)

To fear God means to be impressed with the knowledge of his greatness and power, to stand in awe of his sovereign majesty, and to be ever solicitous and to avoid whatsoever might awaken against us, his indignation.

But there must be here no question of servile fear ; for this holy fear is like that of a well-mannered child, who is more anxious about the pleasure or displeasure he causes his kind parent than about any punishment the latter may inflict, or any reward he may bestow.

Such a fear is, truly, the beginning of wisdom, the foundation of amendment of life, a sure bulwark against every assault of the enemy—the lever of every Christian virtue.

This fear, by degrees, is changed into love ; and a loving fear prepares for us the crown of eternal life.

Fear God, O Christian young man ;—temptations are violent and unceasing—the passions are all but irresistible ; the waves rise mountain high—rocks and quicksand are on every side.—Lord, save us—we perish. (Mt. 8 : 25.) You need a powerful anchor : the fear of God.

Fear God, O young heart, and turn from the evil ways which, perchance, you have entered. The Lord's judgments are a great deep. (Ps. 35 : 7.) Seek in time the God of mercy, that you may not fall into the hands of the God of justice.

Fear God, O young soul,—and if in time of temptation, your love for him is not strong enough to deter you from evil, then let his fear at least restrain you. If you forget his claims as your loving Father and Benefactor, remember him, at any rate, as your Almighty Judge ; if his mercy and kindness cannot bind you to him, let the thought of his vengeance keep you from straying away.

Fear God, dear young man,—and fear him alone. All

besides can do you but little harm, or rather they can do none except what he permits. Satan and his emissaries may continually lay snares for your innocence, but their menaces are but vain boasts. God's wrath, on the other hand, lasts for ever, and his avenging hand never withdraws itself from the reprobate.

A wise man feareth and declineth from evil; the fool leapeth over, and is confident. (Prov. 14 : 16.)

16.

TIME.

"*Behold, short years pass away, and I am walking in a path by which I shall not return.*" (Job 16 : 23.)

Time is the price of eternity.

Time is worth God : for in time we may gain God.

Time is life, and life consists of the actions that fill it. These actions will, at last, decide our fate in the scales of eternity.

Precious time which embraces eternity, yea, God himself, as the shell encloses the kernel.

This is the bridge to eternity. Across it earth's pilgrims pass to the eternal fatherland.

Time is a grace, yea, the greatest of graces, because it is the condition of every grace. Give time to the reprobate —and he is saved ; give time to one of the elect—and his throne is elevated, his glory increased.

But time consists of years, months, weeks, days, hours, minutes, seconds.

Time is precious ; therefore, the hours are precious, the moments are precious. Most precious of all is the present day, the present hour—the moment now passing by ; for such moments are to time what many particles of gold-dust are to the bar of gold.

Properly speaking, neither the past nor the future are precious for you—for the former is irrevocable and the latter has not yet arrived. The present moment, alone, is yours. It is in your grasp, you can and must utilize it, it is your time.

With regard to the past, justice says : It belongs to me ; with regard to the future, providence says : It belongs to me ;—the present is the time of mercy.

Time—so precious, so decisive, why dost thou pass so quickly, and yet so unnoticed ?

No sooner do I fix mine eyes upon thee, than thou art gone. The present has already become the past, the future is now the present, and in the present the past and the future flow together.

Behold yonder stream, its rapid waves rush on,—while you watch them one ripple constantly succeeds another. There is no delay, no stand-still.

Behold, short years pass away, and I am walking in a path by which I shall not return. (Job 16 : 23.)

Our days upon earth are like a shadow ; and there is no stay. (Paralip. 29 : 15.)

Man cometh forth like a flower, and fleeth as a shadow. (Job 14 : 2.)

What is your life ? It is vapor which appeareth for a little while, and afterwards shall vanish away. (James 4 : 15.)

Our life is like a shadow, and like a post that runneth on, and as a ship that passeth through the waves, whereof when it is gone by, the traces cannot be found, nor the

path of its keel in the waters ; as a bird that flieth through the air, of the passage of which no mark can be found ; or as an arrow, behind which the divided air presently cometh together again, so that the passage thereof is not known. (Wisd. 5 : 9-12.)

With the swiftly-passing time passes away our life. The stream of our days, hours, and moments empties into the ocean of eternity.

Infancy, childhood, boyhood, youth—all pass away. Stronger and stronger swells the stream of time ; more boisterous flow the waves, the nearer they approach the ocean. Mark that wide, expansive sea before you ! —O fleeting time, stop ! Useless cry ! it is drowned by the roaring waves.

O lost time, come back ! Useless cry ! the waves return not from the ocean.

Return, O years of boyhood, which robbed me of my innocence ! In vain.

O years of youth, in which I neglected to fit myself for my future vocation—return ! In vain.

Days misspent and wasted in idleness—come back once more ! In vain.

O moments desecrated by sin !—return ! In vain.

I am walking in a path by which I shall not return. (Job 16 : 23.)

Yes, not only does time roll on in an impetuous current —you, yourself, your life, your works, your salvation, are borne away upon its tide.

Only One is stable and unchangeable—he of whom and through whom all time is, who has given us time—from whom we ourselves are.

Do you wish to gain a foothold in the torrent, do you wish to stand firm in the midst of the turbulent stream ? Cling fast to God.

Time will then flow past you, and leave you in safety.

It will bear from you only what is earthly and useless. The best and noblest will be secured for ever.

O son, observe the time, and fly from evil. (Ecclus. 4 : 23.) Value it highly, make good use of it.

Soon, very soon, time shall be no more for you. (Apoc. 10 : 6.)

Defraud not thyself of the good day, and let not the part of a good gift overpass thee. (Ecclus. 14 : 14.)

17.

THE EXCUSES OF THE SINNER.

"*Incline not my heart to evil words ; to make excuses in sins.*" (Ps. 140 : 4.)

Cowardice and malice abound with excuses for sins, excuses for past transgressions, and for future misdeeds.

Sinner, only those excuses are valid which will be accepted by the infinitely just Judge : all others are deception, falsehood, and self-delusion. Vain are the sons of men ; the sons of men are liars in the balances. (Ps. 61 : 10.)

Youth, especially, is much given to excuses ; it cheats itself with false views or exaggerated fancies.

You complain of the severity of the Law, the transgression of which makes you a criminal. And yet this law is only the voice of nature ; and the Author of nature is God.

The law is our rule of action. Every rule is a measure of proportion. God's commandments must, therefore, be proportioned to our strength ; otherwise, they cannot be our rule of action.

Do you still talk of severity, or, what is worse, of impossibility ?

Hear the Law-giver himself : This commandment, that I command thee this day, is not above thee, nor far off from thee : nor is it in heaven, that thou shouldst say : Which of us can go up to heaven to bring it unto us, and we may hear and fulfil it in work ? Nor is it beyond the sea. But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it. (Deut. 30 : 11-14.)

Hear what Jesus says : My yoke is sweet, and my burden light. (Matt. 11 : 30.)

And St. John says : God's commandments are not heavy. (1. John 5 : 3.)

What do you say to the example of Christ, to that of his Saints, yea, of so many of his youthful Saints ?

Does the service of the world demand no sacrifices ?

What labors are undertaken, what obstacles overcome, what insults and humiliations endured, for the sake of acquiring riches, honors and pleasures ! O blindness and folly, O injustice towards a God who by his sacred law, seeks only our welfare !

You urge the charm which creatures exercise over you ? Possession entices, lust allures—very true. But what are creatures ? Are they our end and aim ? By no means ; they are the means to an end—hence, they are to be kept in subordination. Creatures are vain, frail, and perishable. They come to us floating on the stream of time, and the waves that brought them, also bear them away. The figure of this world passeth away. (1. Cor. 7 : 31.)

I am yet so inexperienced, you say, I lack insight. I

want strength of will ; add to this the levity which is natural to youth, and the power of habit and example.

Young man, be sincere. Would you really dare to speak thus in the presence of your divine Judge ? In other matters, you are so ambitious, so self-conceited, so independent, so manly, so active, so jealous of your reputation, but in this respect, so pusillanimous, so spiritless, so childish—a toy, a plaything. O shame !

You are inexperienced ?—Supply your want of prudence and experience by the prudence and experience of others, by grace from above,—the light of fervent prayer. You know that the good spirit is given to them that ask it. (Luke 11 : 13.) Have you not parents and superiors ? Have you not, or can you not have, a spiritual guide and director ? You are inexperienced—believe, therefore, those who have experience, permit yourself to be warned, taught, guided. In everything else you follow a master,—in this you wish to be your own teacher ; but beware ! He that has himself for a teacher, has a fool for a scholar. (St. Bern.)

You are weak ?—Lean on others who can, and will support you. Above all, lean on God. Why so neglectful of prayer ? Why so slothful in good ? Why receive so seldom the Sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist ? O balm that heals all wounds ! O never-failing source of life and strength ! O heavenly, refreshing draught of the faint and weary!

Why yield to that heedlessness and frivolity which do you so much injury ? You live in entire forgetfulness of duty, always shrinking from the bitter draught of self-denial.

Example entices you ?—Why do you love darkness rather than the light ? Would you rather imitate a sinner than a saint ? Apostles, martyrs, confessors, tender virgins, youths,

boys, children. O cloud of witnesses (Hebr. 12 : 1), luminous, resplendent cloud, overshadow these of little faith, and let them behold and feel what man is with God, and what he can do through his power !

If the Saints spoke as you do—heaven would be empty, its thrones would now be tenantless.

Habit ? Who has riveted these chains ? Is it not the work of your own hands ? It may now require a violent effort to burst them, but hasten to make that effort before it be too late.

And these inflamed passions ?—How powerless am I to resist them !

Why did you allow them to become so strong and powerful ? Why did you so readily surrender to this fearful captivity ?

However, be of good heart ; by the aid of grace you can yet bring these monsters into subjection. Arm yourself against yourself. Resolution, courage, perseverance, and you are, and will remain, master.

Besides, O youth, you can ; not only because you must, but also because, in reality, you are almighty whenever there is question of your salvation. Were you dependent on yourself in this combat for life or death, you would have reason to despair of success—but, the Lord is with you and in you.

Yes, I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me. (Phil. 4 : 13.) O consoling words ! Grace is mightier than nature ; it is stronger than seductive example, more impetuous than the impetuosity of youth, more fiery than the heat of passion, more violent than the violence of habit ; it fills up the valleys of my ignorance and inexperience, it levels the mountains of difficulties In it and through it, all obstacles are easily overcome, for, through my God I shall go over a wall. (Ps. 17 : 30.)

Grace, grace—almighty as God himself, with thee I can do all things! False and foolish are all my pretexts; they are but the evil words to which my heart inclines to seek excuses in sins. (Ps. 140 : 4.)

18.

RELAPSE INTO SIN.

"*My son, hast thou sinned? do so no more.*" (Ecclus. 21 : 1.)

One mortal sin is in itself something abominable, wicked and injurious beyond all conception.

What, then, shall we say of the relapsing sinner? God has just pardoned him, and already is the brief of pardon torn, the fetters of sin are riveted anew, and God's justice once more challenged in the most arrogant manner.

Human respect, levity, self-reliance, tampering with sinful occasions, cowardice in temptations, these are the usual causes of relapse into sin.

Has God, perhaps, pardoned you that you should offend him afresh?

The oftener, after forgiveness, the insult is repeated, the deeper becomes the wound inflicted on the loving heart of God.

Ingrate! is it thus you return evil for good? Shall the divine pardon only render you more bold and audacious in attacking your Benefactor?

It is the height of ingratitude to employ a benefit as a weapon of attack.

And is this not done by that relapse into sin to which the mercy of God and his willingness to forgive seems to encourage you?

Instead of being faithful to your promises, which seemed so firm and sacred, you basely break them, and in your dealings with the Almighty act in a way that would disgrace you before the meanest of men.

Instead of co-operating with grace, instead of striving to preserve your recovered right to heaven, you treat God and his priceless reward with sovereign contempt.

But—consider what grace is—try to realize its immense value.

It is a heavenly gift.

It is a gift won for us by the blood and sweat, the sufferings and toils of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a gift which includes heaven itself, since heaven is the price of grace well employed; and the degree of our eternal joy or misery will be proportioned to our use or abuse of grace.

Consider, moreover, what heaven is.

Heaven is the blissful eternity, the everlasting possession and enjoyment of God himself, who is the highest Good, the infinite Source of all beatitude.

For a handful of barley, and a piece of bread, they have forsaken me, complains the Lord through his prophet. (Ezech. 13 : 19.)

For the vilest earthly pleasures, you have forsaken God and forfeited Paradise.

You reject the recovered friendship of God, instead of confirming it. Instead of loving God the more ardently, because in his great kindness he has pardoned you so much, you heap sin upon sin, crime upon crime. But you inflict the greatest injury upon yourself by these relapses. You had died to sin (Rom. 6 : 2) and now you live to it and in it, again.

You had been snatched from hell, and you now prepare to precipitate yourself once more into the yawning abyss.

The chains of Satan had been struck from your soul, and you voluntarily return to bondage ; you consent to languish again in the dark dungeon of sin, weighed down by the galling yoke of the most cruel of all tyrants.

The black clouds of divine wrath had passed away ; serenely and cheerfully heaven smiled upon you : and now all is dark again ; new storms arise ; conscience again utters its reproaches : your soul, traveling backward over the same evil ways (Jer. 2 : 36), has been degraded and deformed more than words can tell.

Why had you given up that sin ?

Because it appeared to you abominable and disgraceful.

Why, then, have you returned to it, like a dog to its vomit ? Surely mortal sin has not changed its nature or its terrible consequences.

Alas ! no—God bears the same hatred to it now as before ; hell with all its terrors still threatens us, death is certain—its hour, uncertain. Oh ! beware of treasuring up wrath and misery against the day of wrath, and revelation of the just judgment of God by your hard, impenitent, and unfaithful heart. (Rom. 2 : 5.) Beware lest your last state become worse than the first (Luke 11 : 26) ; and you perish by the rope of your own iniquities. (Prov. 5 : 22.)

The Lord is a jealous God, and his wrath will, at last, overtake you. He takes revenge on his adversaries, and is angry with his enemies. (Nahum 1 : 2.)

Beware lest he cast his abominations upon you, and make an example of you. (Nahum 3 : 6.)

Hearken to the Holy Ghost : The earth that drinketh in the rain which cometh often upon it, and bringeth forth thorns and briers, is rejected, and very near to a curse, whose end is to be burnt. (Hebr. 6 : 7, 8.)

It had been better for relapsing sinners not to have known the way of justice, than, after they had known it, to turn back from that holy commandment, which was delivered to them. For, that of the true proverb hath happened to them : The dog has returned to his own vomit ; and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire. (2. Pet. 2 : 21, 22.)

If I build up again the things which I have destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. (Gal. 2 : 18.)

O my son, if you have had the misfortune to sin, do so no more. (Ecclus. 21 : 1.) On the contrary, endeavor to repair the past, and pray to God for the grace of perseverance.

Do not drive him rudely out of your young heart. He expects better things of you. Be noble, tender, devoted, grateful.

Behold, thou art made whole : sin no more, lest some worse thing happen to thee. (John 5 : 14.)

19.

THE HABIT OF SIN.

"*Woe to you that draw iniquity with the cords of vanity and sin, as the rope of a cart.*" (Is. 5 : 18.)

There are no chains more cruel or galling than those of a bad habit.

We commit a sin several times. Each time we commit it more easily and more wilfully ;—the intervals between each offense become briefer. A relapse constantly renewed

forms a bad habit. Soon sin becomes a second nature ; and, at length, gains such a mastery over us as to be an absolute necessity. Our life is then a never-ceasing sin. (2. Pet. 2 : 14.)

Who can explain or comprehend the misery of this state ?

The understanding is darkened more and more. It soon reaches such a depth of obscurity as to call evil good, and good evil (Is. 5 : 20), and glory to be mighty in iniquity. (Ps. 51 : 3.)

The whisperings of conscience are faint and low ; our continual efforts to silence it have well nigh succeeded.

The will grows weaker and weaker ; finally it altogether ceases to exert itself against evil. The monarch is dethroned, and the slave wears his crown, and wields his sceptre.

At the slightest rising of the passions, the soul surrenders without resistance.

Nay, more, the habitual sinner advances to meet his enemy ; he throws himself into the arms of his destroyer ; he is insane enough to gladly receive and welcome to his abode the murderer of his soul.

It may well be said of such a man that he put on cursing like a garment : and it went in like water into his entrails, and like oil into his bones. (Ps. 108 ; 18.)

The curse, the vicious habit, envelops him like a garment ; looks, gestures, words, actions—all bear its stamp.

The curse, the vicious habit, has entered into his interior. Conscience, imagination, memory—all are filled with it.

It has, so to speak, become the element of his life. It has taken the place of faith which has been forced to yield to the presumptuous prejudices and lies of passion. It becomes to him his only hope, for the goods of heaven he has long since renounced. Love, the true, the pure,

the only noble, the love of the Creator, has no place in that heart, all engrossed and desecrated with the love of creatures.

Habit is like a garment which covereth him, and like a girdle with which he is girded. (Ps. 108: 19.) It clings closely to him, and has become one with him.

Habit is like the waters of a torrent—wild, impetuous, overwhelming, all-destroying. Habit is like oil staining a fabric; deeper and deeper it penetrates, and forms indelible spots.

Awful condition!

Continued, hundredfold, thousandfold death! A hundred times decomposed carcass—grave that is never closed, but continually deepens and lets down its victim closer to hell!

And this state of horror has become a second nature to us; we cease not to sin with pleasure, and soon without any remorse, with a kind of rage, an openly-declared defiance of the known good!

And does not the malice of our sins increase with their number?

Though the object is not always increased, the inclination thereto, the affection for it, is increased; the will to amend decreases, and the facility in sinning is greatly augmented. Thou hast slain, moreover, also thou hast taken possession. Thou art sold to do evil in the sight of the Lord. (2. Kings 21: 19, 20.)

You love your sin more and more; and you daily become more and more wedded to the creature. Just as, when you do good and practise virtue, the love of God and of all good increases in you, so repeated sin confirms you in the spirit of hell and the love of all evil.

We grow hardened, indifferent. We become spiritually blind. Extraordinary graces becoming rarer, the inclination to sin is quickened.

Who is to blame for this? Who has darkened your understanding? Who has enslaved your will? Who has silenced conscience, banished grace, and kept it at a distance?

O dangerous state! far worse than merely an occasional fall into sin!

Wretched enough is your soul when stained with only one mortal sin; at any moment you may die and fall into hell. But the heart is not yet hardened, you are still susceptible of divine inspiration; it needs only a little effort to return to the path of virtue.

But habitual sin leads to insensibility, to obduracy, yea, even to a provocation of the terrible judgments of God.

Abominable and unprofitable is the man who drinketh iniquity like water. (Job. 15: 16.)

Behold the career of the boy, the young man, who has sold himself body and soul, to that greatest of all tyrants —a bad habit! Five years pass away—ten years, and still no change! A slave for five, ten, thirty, forty years —what degradation!

How such a slavery must destroy even what is naturally good in a man, and efface every virtuous trait his character possesses! How it deforms the mind, distorts the feelings, poisons the heart, and infects the soul as with a leprosy.

And then—what a retrospect is this dark chaos, this ignoble, ignominious past!

And, finally, the death-bed!

O young man, have pity on your own soul. (Ecclus. 30: 24.)

Everything is at stake—therefore, everything is to be risked.

Lord, draw me out of the mire, that I may not stick fast. Deliver me out of the deep waters. Let not the tempests of water drown me, nor the deep swallow me up:

and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me. (Ps. 68 : 15, 16.) O Lord, hear my prayer.

20.

DELAY OF CONVERSION.

"*Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day.*" (Ecclus. 5 : 8.)

Is it the fear of difficulty, or is it your levity and folly that hinder you from returning to God ?

How is it possible for me to refrain from that sin, to overcome that bad habit ?

It may be difficult—impossible it is not, since time and grace are still yours.

Will you delay the remedy until your wounds have become incurable ? Each new sin is a tearing open of the old, deep scars ; it renders the passions more daring and importunate ; concupiscence being more violently inflamed, deprives the understanding of another degree of light, the will of another degree of strength, alienates us more from God, rivets more firmly the chains of Satan and of the world, and draws you more surely into the terrible whirlpool of sin.

To break these chains, to escape from this vortex, is easier to-day than to-morrow—easier to-morrow than later.

You can if you will. All that is wanting to you is a strong effort. God wills every moment your conversion, your salvation—but you must co-operate with his grace.

Every moment you are bound to return to the divine friendship, to aspire to your true destiny, to attain your immortal end.

If you really desire to be converted, do it at once.

Fool that I am ! To what do I trust? I will be converted, I say, next week, next month, next year—and I cannot promise myself even to-night !

I will be converted on my death-bed—What do I know but what I may die in my chair—in the street—in the cars —in the railway-coach—in the steamer, on my way to a pleasure party ?

A certain man had said : Soul, thou hast much good laid up for many years ; take thy rest, eat, drink, and make good cheer. The future is secured. (Luke 12 : 19.)

Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee : and whose shall all those things be, which thou hast provided ? (Luke 12 : 20.) What is more certain than death ?

Yet what is more uncertain than the When, the Where, the How we shall die ?

Awful certainty ! Mysterious uncertainty !

Thirty-six millions of human beings annually pass from life to death.

One hundred thousand die every day. The day will surely come, when, poor little atom that I am !—I must form one of this vast multitude ! There is no possibility of escape. I will then choose the better part, and hold myself in readiness.

I will keep myself prepared ; delays are dangerous, sometimes fatal. Death may come unheralded.

Know it to be a communication with death. (Ecclus. 9 : 20.)

Know that death is the invisible sharer of all you possess : house, bed, table, bath, journey.

You are going in the midst of snares. (Ecclus. 7 : 20.)

You are young—granted ; but how many young persons die ! Where are those young companions with whom you once worked, or played, or, alas ! sinned ? Have you not seen them in their coffins—laid in the tomb ?

Old people must die ; young people may die any day ; and many of them do die, every day. Who has assured you that you will grow to manhood, that you will reach old age ? Behold, your coffin follows you like your shadow ; perhaps, to-morrow, it will close over your corpse !

The warm rays of the sun do not ripen all fruit ; the wind blows off many while yet hard and green ; and forgotten, they lie in the dust, and are trodden under foot.

O, be careful always to keep in your lamp the oil of charity ; labor to remain in the state of grace, lest the Bridegroom come unexpectedly ; and finding you unprepared, should exclude you with the foolish virgins from the joyful marriage feast, crying out to you : I know you not. Say not : The mercy of the Lord is great : he will have mercy on the multitude of my sins. For mercy and wrath quickly come from him ; and his wrath looketh upon sinners. Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day. For his wrath shall come on a sudden ; and in the time of vengeance he will destroy thee. (Ecclus. 5 : 6 : 9.)

21.

OBSTINACY AND PRESUMPTION.

"*The wicked man, when he is come into the depth of sin, contemneth.*" (Prov. 18 : 3.)

Shall I refuse to be converted to the Lord, because he is good ? Despise the riches of his goodness and patience

and long suffering? Knowest thou not that the benignity of God leadeth thee to penance? (Rom. 2 : 4.)

What well-behaved child would abuse the love of his father by repeated offenses?

What subject could basely continue to rebel against his king, to whose clemency he is already indebted for his goods and life?

Because God is good, I also must be good, that is, I must appreciate his love, respond to it with all my heart, and make good use of the graces he bestows.

You say: God has often pardoned me; he will continue to do so, and will admit me to his heavenly kingdom in spite of my sins.

Do you not know that God's patience and long-suffering mercy have their limits? At this moment, his graces are gently descending upon you, for, behold how your spirit is enlightened, how your heart is moved—how you are again drawn to the God of your childhood!

But what assurance have you that this shall always continue? As God is master of time, so is he also of grace; and can you call him unjust if he refuses both time and grace to him who despises them?

The sinner can be saved only by a true, sincere conversion. But such a conversion is the fruit of his own co-operation with the grace of God. That grace it is through whose divine efficacy I not only can be converted but am really converted in spite of all obstacles and difficulties.

Can you lay claim to so precious and powerful a grace, when, hitherto you have made so little account of it,—have received it in fact, only to waste or trample upon it?

How often has the Lord stood at the door of your heart, knocking and pleading for admission? (Apoc. 3 : 20.) But there was no response from within.

You have heard the gentle voice with indifference or

vexation, and obstinately refused him entrance. What wonder, if he finally turn away or if, at least, he knock less loudly, his call becomes fainter and fainter? (Cant. 5 : 4.)

O friend, be not deceived : God is not mocked. (Gal. 6 : 7.) Because I called, and you refused ; I stretched out my hand ; and there was none that regarded. You have despised all my counsel, and have neglected my reprehensions. I also will laugh in your destruction. (Prov. 1 : 24-26.)

Seek ye the Lord, while he may be found : call upon him while he is near. (Is. 55 : 6.)

Walk whilst you have the light, that the darkness overtake you not. (John 12 : 35.)

Make an agreement with thy adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him : lest, perhaps, the adversary deliver thee to the judge. (Matt. 5 : 25.)

We would have cured Babylon, but she is not healed— let us forsake her, because her judgment hath reached even to heaven and is lifted up to the clouds. (Jer. 51 : 9.)

Many, I say to you, shall seek to enter, but shall not be able. (Luke 13 : 24.) Many shall desire salvation ; but, for want of taking sufficient pains, and being thoroughly in earnest, shall not attain it.

You think, perhaps, that it is easy at any hour to say with David : I have sinned (2. Kings 12 : 13), and, like him, to obtain pardon. It is, indeed, easy to say the words of that royal penitent, but how powerless are they to win forgivenesss unless accompanied with his sentiments of profound repentance. Did not Pharaoh utter the same words, and Saul, Antiochus, and Judas? And did they not all die impenitent?

God had given them time for penance, and they abused it unto pride (Job 24 : 23), and thus it was verified, that, a hard heart shall fare evil at the last (Ecclus. 3 : 27) ;

and : That the death of the wicked is very evil. (Ps. 33 : 22.)

But you ask : Is not a death-bed repentance always true and effectual ? Alas ! very often it is itself a sick, a feeble, an apparent conversion which is utterly unable to effect the salvation of a soul.

Would you begin to do penance only when you are no longer able to sin ? Then, truly, you do not forsake sin, but sin forsakes you.

What is the hope of the hypocrite ? Will God hear his cry, when distress shall come upon him ? (Job 27 : 8, 9.)

O young soul, beloved Jerusalem, behold, how the Lord weeps ;—he weeps over you ! If thou didst know, and in this thy day, the things that are for thy peace. (Luke 19 : 42.) O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered together thy children, as the hen gathereth the chickens under her wings, and thou wouldst not. Behold, your house shall be left to you desolate. (Matt. 23 : 37, 38.)

Do you not see that your obduracy grieves God most bitterly ? If you die young—and impenitent—he must damn you young. If you live to mature years, to old age, and continue in your evil courses, you waste and desecrate the most beautiful part of your life—youth ; your conversion becomes more uncertain, more difficult, and less meritorious.

Why always say : To-morrow ? Why not say: Now ? Why will you not now, immediately, at once, rise from your misery and degradation, cleanse yourself from your sins in the tribunal of Penance, free your conscience from the remorse that weighs upon it, and begin a new, a better life ? Think well on it, before it be too late !

22

A BAD CONSCIENCE.

"*They are all gone aside, they are become unprofitable together : there is none that doeth good : no, not one.* (Ps. 13 : 3.)

Conscience is nothing less than the voice of God himself. It is the infinitely Holy, in the innermost depths of our hearts, indicating the good or condemning the evil.

It is the rule of all good, written by the Creator's hand upon the creature's heart. It is a ray of the eternal Sun of Justice seeking to penetrate our darkened souls, warming and enlightening, if it be admitted, scorching and blasting, if excluded.

Is it not true, that when you do a good deed, the approving voice of conscience is your immediate reward ; but, if you commit sin, its reproaches are your sharp and speedy punishment ? If you do ill, shall not sin be forthwith at your door ? (Gen. 4 : 7.)

As there is no greater happiness here below, than a quiet, peaceful conscience, so again, there is no greater torment than a guilty, reproachful, accusing conscience. No viper is so venomous, no dagger so sharp, no poison so deadly, as conscience avenging itself on the evil-doer ; it is a hell on earth.

Sometimes, the sinner imagines that he has succeeded in silencing it, but he is deceived. Some striking calamity,

a death, a misfortune, suddenly destroys the artificial peace.

Without any apparent cause, while all around is gay and delightful, the heart is suddenly oppressed with a gloom which the most intoxicating joys cannot dispel ; bitterness is mingled with every draught of pleasure ; in vain gold glitters and jewels sparkle—mirth and feasting have lost their charms. Destruction and unhappiness are in the ways of the wicked, and the way of peace they knew not, for no fear of God is before their eyes. (Ps. 13 : 3.)

The sound of dread is always in his ear and when there is peace, he always suspects treason. He looks roundabout for the sword on every side ; tribulation terrifies him and distress surrounds him. (Job 15 : 21-24.)

The wicked man fleeth when no man pursueth : but the just, bold as a lion, shall be without dread. (Prov. 28 : 1.)

This very dread which always accompanies wickedness bears testimony to its iniquity ; For whereas wickedness is fearful, it beareth witness of its own condemnation ; for a troubled conscience always forecasteth grievous things. For fear is nothing else but a yielding up the succors from thought. And while there is less expectation from within, the greater doth it count the ignorance of that cause which bringeth the torment. (Wisd. 17 : 10-12.)

Sad state, whose terrors alone should induce us to abandon sin !

How many young men are prematurely aged by an evil conscience ! There is no youthful joy or freshness in their countenance—the darkness that reigns within is visible in every feature. Life, in its very beginning, has lost all its brightness ; everything is dull, withered, faded ; either unseemly levity or vexatious caprice. No true cheerfulness, no lasting serenity. Sometimes, the glance of the eye is unsteady, vacant ; again, it stares fixedly at

some object or seems turned inward on some gloomy reminiscence.

Is it the cares of life, which torment this poor young man? Is it domestic unhappiness that weighs upon his heart? Or has he consumed his strength by exhausting labors?

No: the outward heaven is serene as usual; but inwardly, there has been a great tempest, and its devastations are depicted in every feature of the troubled young face.

Unhappy heart, which is poisoned by the venom of that viper—deadly Sin!

And what if not one, but broods of those vipers twine their coils around it?

Can you deaden the pain of your wound by quaffing deeper draughts of intoxicating pleasures, by shutting out altogether the light of grace and then exulting that you no longer see the viper or feel its sting? You say that your heart is calm and untroubled, you fear neither death nor future punishment. O most frightful of all states! Unhappy man, this is the silence of God, far more terrible than the thunder-bolts of his wrath.

God has withdrawn himself, grace is dumb; for—Conscience is God, Conscience is grace. O pray, pray that it may speak again. O my God, be not thou silent to me, lest if thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit. (Ps. 27 : 1.)

But it is to be hoped that matters have not yet reached so terrible a crisis with you. Your conscience torments you; it gives you no peace, day or night.

Perhaps, you say to yourself: I can no longer live in this way; why should I be my own greatest enemy by remaining in so wretched a state? Why continue to drain a cup of bitterness which I can so easily dash from me?

Yes, O young sinner, how long will you be dull of heart?

(Ps. 4 : 3.) How long will you groan under the burden of your guilt ?

Shake off the heavy load—be no longer the fettered slave of sin, but follow the path of life with the gladsome step and peaceful heart of those whom the truth has made free.

Approach the Lord, and darkness shall be as the noonday —And the Lord will give thee rest continually, and will fill thy soul with brightness, and deliver thy bones ; and thou shalt be as a watered garden, and like a fountain of water, whose waters shall not fail. (Is. 58 : 10, 11.)

23.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

"*I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore have I drawn thee ; taking pity on thee.*" (Jeremiah 31 : 3.)

Behold, the Lord will put an end to your torment !

Do you know the Good Shepherd, who leaves the ninety-nine sheep in the mountains, and goes to seek that which is gone astray. (Matt. 18 : 12.)

I am the Good Shepherd, says Jesus Christ our Saviour. The good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep. (John 10 : 11.) The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. (Luke 19 : 10.) I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly. (John 10 : 10.)

O, read in the eye of the Good Shepherd his affectionate solicitude, his anxiety, his desire !

Behold, how he hastens ; how his voice allures !

His anxious eye seeks you amid the dark paths in which you wander: he does not tire in his pursuit though he tracks the way with his blood, and you still flee. O straying lamb, he desires to rescue you from destruction,—allow him to overtake you; he will gently raise you in his arms and carry you to the green pastures where he feeds his flocks.

Why will you persist in flying from this Good Shepherd? Do you find more pleasure among the wolves and the savage beasts of the wilderness than with the quiet flock of Christ, and within the secure enclosure of his fold?

Have you not wearied in the way of iniquity and destruction? Have you not walked through hard ways? (Wisdom 5 : 7.)

You would not suffer gentle violence from him who has loved you with an eternal love? (Jeremiah 31 : 3.)

Yes, Father of my young soul, I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost; seek thy servant, because I have not forgotten thy commandments. (Ps. 118 : 176.) My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready. (Ps. 107 : 2.)

24.

GOD'S INFINITE MERCY.

"*As I live, sayeth the Lord God, I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way, and live.*" (Ezech. 33 : 11.)

God rejects no sinner who does true penance.

God is charity (John 4 : 16.); and, since he desires nothing more ardently than that all men be saved (1. Tim.

2 : 4), he is ready at all times graciously to receive the sincere penitent.

As I live, sayeth the Lord God, I desire not the death of the wicked, but rather that he turn from his evil way, and live. (Ezech. 33 : 11.)

The Lord is gracious and merciful, patient and plenteous in mercy. (Ps. 144 : 8.)

If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as wool. (Is. 1 : 18.)

No doubt, God hates sin and must hate it, wheresoever and in whomsoever he finds it ; but the repentant sinner already turns to God,—hence, God turns to him, and pardons him.

How merciful was Jesus to the converted publican, Magdalene, Peter, and the good thief on the cross !

This day is salvation come to this house. (Luke 19 : 9.)

Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much. (Luke 7 : 47.)

And Jesus looked on Peter. (Luke 22 : 91.)

Amen, I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with me in Paradise. (Luke 23 : 43.)

In what consoling terms did not our loving Redeemer speak of divine mercy and the repentant sinner !

Why did he institute the Sacrament of Penance, why did he give to his Apostles and to their lawful successors, the power of forgiving sins ?

Yes, the earth is full of the mercy of God. (Ps. 32 : 5.)

The whole work of Redemption,—every step of the God-Man in this valley of tears, every sigh of anguish, every drop of blood, and meekly-endured torture—what are these but witnesses of a love without measure, of a mercy without limits ?

You see it with your own eyes : His tender mercies are above all his works. (Ps. 144 : 9.)

It cost the Almighty only a single Fiat to create this immense universe—nothingness resisted not its Lord. But how dearly did the Redeemer purchase the grace of conversion for the sinner ? Yet, we make light of sin, and seldom even bestow a thought upon the Passion and death of a God-Man ! O shameful ingratitude !

In order to partially fathom this ocean of goodness, consider who it is that pardons, and who it is that needs pardon.

How difficult do we find it to forgive an offense ! We are of the same nature as our offenders, as weak, malicious, and prone to evil as they, yet, although urged by reason itself to show mercy and forbearance to others, we refuse to do so. But here, there is question of God—and me—the infinite Creator and the finite creature !

How does God forgive ? Does he not pardon graciously ? Behold, I stand at the door and knock. (Apoc. 3 : 20.)

Does he not pardon quickly ? One act of sincere contrition, and the sinner is admitted again to the divine friendship.

I said, I will confess against myself my injustice to the Lord ; and thou hast forgiven the wickedness of my sin. (Ps. 31 : 5.)

Does not God forgive completely, retaining no remembrance of our guilt ?

If the wicked do penance for all his sins which he hath committed, and keep all my commandments, living, he shall live, and shall not die ; and I will not remember all his iniquities that he hath done. (Ezech. 13 : 21, 22.)

The wickedness of the wicked shall not hurt him, in what day soever he shall turn from his wickedness. (Ezech. 33 : 22.)

True, it is written : Be not without fear about sin forgiven ! (Ecclus. 5 : 5.) But even this word is a word of

mercy, warning us against false security and inciting us to labor the more, that by great fervor and good works we make sure our vocation and election. (2. Peter 1 : 10.)

Moreover : God forgives us not till seven times but till seventy times seven (Matt. 18 : 22) ; or, as often as the sinner, with proper dispositions, in real sorrow and detestation of sin, seeks to return to him.

But the divine mercy goes still farther. God not only pardons the sinner,—he returns good for evil ; he rewards him for forsaking sin, and responding to his gracious call ; he chooses an enemy for his favorite, he gives far more than was asked, viz. : himself,—heaven,—never-ending felicity.

Yes, he even vouchsafes to rejoice over the return of his ungrateful creature. Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost. (Luke 15 : 6.)

O incomprehensible, O inscrutable treasure of the mercies of God ! he who despises thee is worse than the demons who were allowed no share in thee,—more insensible than the beast of the field ;— he is his own most bitter enemy ; and the personified hater of all light. (John 3 : 20.)

What can he expect, who rejects these riches of the mercies of God ? Nothing remains for him, but to fall a victim to God's terrible justice—to be doomed to hell, which really is not deep enough to bury and hide such a monster of insensibility and ingratitude.

Noble young heart, are you not won by the inexpressible love of this most merciful Father ?

If so, then surrender yourself to this ineffable excess of condescension and generosity. Who shall profit by your return ?—Not the Lord, for he has no need of you ;—you alone will gain unspeakable advantages and escape dire destruction.

No creature of God can contribute to his essential happiness ; he is the infinite ocean of beatitude, which can

neither lose one tittle, nor receive one additional drop. All the beasts of the woods are mine, the cattle on the hills, and the oxen. If I should be hungry, I would not tell thee, for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof. (Ps. 49 : 10-12.)

The question, therefore, is your own happiness, your peace of mind and conscience, here below, and your salvation hereafter.

Go, therefore, with confidence to the throne of grace that you may obtain mercy (Hebr. 4 : 16), and become again a child of God.

25.

THE PRODIGAL SON.

"*How great is the mercy of the Lord and his forgiveness of them that turn to him.*" (Ecclus. 17 : 28.)

And he said : A certain man had two sons ; and the younger of them said to his father : Father, give me the portion of substance that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his substance. And not many days after, the younger son gathering all together, went abroad into a far country : and there wasted his substance, living riotously. And after he had spent all, there came a mighty famine in that country, and he began to be in want. And he went, and cleaved to one of the citizens of that country. And he sent him into his farm to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks the swine did eat : and no man gave unto him. And returning to himself, he

said: How many hired servants in my father's house abound with bread, and I here perish with hunger? I will arise, and will go to my father, and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee: I am not now worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And rising up he came to his father. And when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and running to him, fell upon his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, I am not now worthy to be called thy son. And the father said to his servant: Bring forth quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and make merry: because this my son was dead, and is come to life again: was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. (Luke 15: 11-24.)

Splendid triumph of an almost inconceivable love! Where upon earth can you find such generosity?

And yet, what is here related falls infinitely short of what God's unspeakable mercy effects so often, and in so many, and in so wonderful a manner!

The father mentioned in the parable, remained at home until he saw his son returning to him once more. God goes after his prodigal child,—the sinner; God himself seeks and welcomes him.

The gentle father of the parable was of the same nature as his son; but how infinite is the distance between God and man—between holiness itself and a miserable traitor, a sinner!

The father of the Prodigal, beneficent as he was, could, after all, confer on him only temporal benefits; but in our heavenly Father, the sinner has offended a Benefactor of the supernatural, as well as of the natural, order. Contrast

money, food, raiment, hope of a temporal heritage, with Creation, Redemption, Preservation, Grace, Divine Filiation, and Eternal Beatitude !

Moreover, do we know whether the father of the Gospel,—good, benign, and gracious, as he was,—would have forgiven his ungrateful, unprofitable runaway of a son, a second, a third, a fifth, or a tenth time ? Ah ! perhaps his patience would soon have been exhausted—and his doors soon closed for ever against his unfortunate son. But it is an article of faith, that God rejects no sinner, who, truly penitent—even after erring millions of times—returns to him, and does penance.

Then, have courage, poor heart ! You shall live once more. Revived and reanimated by divine grace, you shall give testimony of God's love ; you shall praise him, and rejoice in his tender mercies.

Truly, great is the mercy of the Lord, great his forgiveness of them that return to him. (Ecclus. 17 : 27.)

Rise up, young man, and return. Leave the far country of Sin. Go out from the land of drouth, of famine, of poverty, of bondage, and degradation! Do you not see the open arms of your Father ready to embrace you, and clasp you to his heart ?

But, having once returned, remain at home, in your Father's house, and leave it no more.

Be grateful, be faithful ! Torment not anew the loving heart of the best of all fathers, by levity, coldness, and treason.

26.

CONVERSION

"*Wash yourselves, be clean, take away the evil of your devices from my eyes.*" (Is. 1 : 16.)

There are various conversions : superficial and radical, transient and durable, apparent and true.

Ignoble motives, mere necessity, exterior assent—one, or all, of these characteristics mark the superficial conversion.

The radical, the true conversion, is a free, high-principled, honest reconciliation with God. It desires, and resolutely makes use of, every means to return to God ; its only care and anxiety is final perseverance. It completely breaks with the past ; and, while it faithfully improves the present, it keeps the future ever before its eyes in all its responsibility and importance.

The transient conversion does, indeed, all that is strictly required for a reconciliation with God,—but there, it stops, and, in a very short time, sinks back into its former state. There is no perseverance.

If sin, according to its essence, is a turning from God and a turning to the creature, the first step of conversion must be a turning from the creature, and a turning to God.

But this turning from and turning to, must be the work of the whole man,—of the understanding, the memory, the imagination, of the will and the affections of the entire outward

man,—recouncing dangerous occasions, bridling the senses and mortifying corrupt nature.

The true conversion does not deal with mere generalities; since it seeks only to please God, it begins with punctually complying with every one of his requirements.

If remedies be prescribed, it makes use of them. If satisfaction be required, it makes it. I desire to live once more, to recover my health, says the soul, and henceforth to become more and more healthy, and never die again by sin!

Do you really intend such a return, such a conversion? Are your motives thereto supernatural? Are you willing faithfully to comply with the conditions required by God?

Lord, I will, cost what it may—I will return to thee. I will have thee again for a friend, for a father; I will be thy child once more. I have had enough of discord, enough of bitterness.

You ask: How shall I begin this return?

First, dear young man, enter into yourself. Close both eye and ear; see only God and yourself; hearken only to grace and your own conscience.

In the turmoil of the world, the warning voice of God is unheard, even as a gentle whisper is lost amid the loud roar of the tempest. I would gladly offer you pure milk, says the Lord; therefore, I would lead you into solitude, and there speak to your heart. (Osee 2 : 14.)

It is impossible for the meek spirit of contrition and compunction to find its way through the noisy turbulence of our every-day life.

Give yourself time for reflection, time for spiritual rest.

One hour with God,—heavenly time of grace! How much has he to tell you; he who knows you so well—before whom your past, present, and future are open and unraveled.—It is so long, alas, since he has had a chance to speak with you!

Does not all misery come from the fact, that, properly speaking, we never belong to ourselves ? Blindly, we rush on, especially the young—day after day, without rest, without spiritual recollection !

We do not do justice to our poor heart ; it becomes estranged to itself ; it has no time to examine its own depths, —always breathless—always in a state of uproar and excitement !

Well, has the prophet said, that the whole land is made desolate, because no one considers in his heart.

So many things there are which must be forgotten ;— yet, if we do not leave our school and teacher—the world —how will we ever forget its lessons ?

So many things there are which must be learned again, which the world has made us forget ! But, if we do not withdraw ourselves from the fatal charm,—what then ?

In the most secret folds of your heart, you will find God and yourself ; whilst, in the turbulent market-place of the world, you will meet neither yourself nor God.

Therefore, God admonishes you so impressively : Return, O transgressor, to the heart. (Is. 46 : 8.) If you return, and be quiet, you shall be saved ; in silence and in hope, shall your strength be. (Is. 30 : 15.)

Do you wish to know the degrees of true conversion— the steps, as it were, towards a thorough change of heart ? Wash yourselves, be clean, take away the evil of your devices from my eyes. Cease to do perversely, learn to do well ; relieve the oppressed, judge for the fatherless, defend the widow. (Is. 1 : 16 : 17.)

Yes, O Lord, I said : Now have I begun. (Ps. 76 : 11.)

Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ? (Acts 9 : 6.)

27.

THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE.

"Mercy and truth have met each other : justice and peace have kissed." (Ps. 84 : 11.)

If you earnestly desire to be converted to God, you must do three things, which may be considered as one: with regard to the past—contrition and satisfaction ; with regard to the future — purpose of amendment ; and with regard to the present—confession. That is, you must make a good confession ;—by it, you will, by an outward assurance, obtain the certainty that you have been restored to God's grace and friendship.

Call to mind that solemn moment, when Jesus breathing on his Apostles, said : Peace be to you. As the Father hath sent me, I also send you. Receive ye the Holy Ghost : Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them : and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained. (John 20 : 21, 22.)

Behold, he makes them judges ; he places in their hands the power of forgiving or of retaining !

O Sacrament of immense significance ! O plenitude of power, surpassing every earthly force ! To bind souls —to loose souls ! Who can do this but God alone, and those to whom he has deputed this power ?

Hear the Son of God : All power is given to me in heaven and on earth. (Matt. 28 : 18.) Does not this include the power to remit sin ? And did not Jesus exercise it,

whilst he sojourned on earth? Yes, he exercised it, to the astonishment of his contemporaries, who asked one another: Who can forgive sins, but God alone? (Mark 2: 7.) And that this very power, when he withdrew from the earth, might not also be withdrawn, Christ confers it upon the Apostles and their successors: As the Father hath sent me, I also send you. (John 20: 21.)

But, you say, Jesus, as the God-Man, was omniscient; the priest, a mere man, is not. Shall he blindly, shall he arbitrarily, bind and loose, close and open?

By no means, my friend! Only according to justice and conscience does a judge of our courts pronounce sentence; only after he has heard the evidence, the clear statement, of facts. And when there is question of a decision which concerns eternity, heaven or hell, how much more just and conscientious must the proceeding be!

It depends upon you to facilitate all this, by a full and candid avowal, by a good, sincere confession.

The punishment of the guilty must, also, be proportioned to his offense. How can this be done if the judge is not made aware of the nature, extent, and attendant circumstances of the crime?

Confession, therefore, is a divine institution, because confession, alone, renders possible the rational exercise of that judicial power which Jesus Christ left to his Church and her anointed ministers.

I understand all this, O my God. I admire thy infinite wisdom, and still more, thy infinite love!

O, what tender solicitude! What condescension to the frailty of poor human nature! If it were extremely difficult for us to obtain pardon for sins committed; after baptism, if we were left in doubt as to when or where that pardon could be obtained, or whether it could be obtained at all, at any cost, how wretched would our condition be!

Truly, in the Sacrament of Penance, Mercy and Truth have met each other, Justice and Peace have kissed. (Ps. 84 : 11.) Man confesses to himself and to God, that is, to the priest in the place of God, his faults and sins, in all sincerity :—and already, the mercy of the Lord approaches the penitent, and meets him, as it were, half-way ; yes, meets him in the tribunal of Penance, where the reconciliation takes place. Justice is satisfied—the kiss of peace is exchanged, and bitter enmity and sorrowful rebellion give place to sweet friendship and joyful obedience.

O that you believe firmly, young man, in this divine institution of the Sacrament of Penance ! The passions rage, the world allures ;—Confession is the bit and bridle of the wild, unruly animal ! Hence, the temptation to disbelief this Sacrament ; hence, the attempt to stamp as the work of man, an institution altogether of divine origin.

O sweet Jesus, adorable Author of this merciful Sacrament ! would it not most grievously offend your Sacred Heart, if a remedy offered us with such infinite love, were repudiated, or, what is worse, abused or profaned by me ?

28.

THE NECESSITY OF CONFESSION.

"*He that hideth his sins shall not prosper : but he that shall confess, and forsake them, shall obtain mercy.*"
(Prov. 28 : 13.)

Whoever sins grievously after holy Baptism, has no other resource, save the Sacrament of Penance ; confession is a necessary condition for pardon.

Even where confession is impossible, perfect contrition only saves the penitent so far as it includes the sincere desire, the firm purpose, of making his confession at the first opportunity

For this reason, the Church calls the Sacrament of Penance the second plank of safety after shipwreck, the second Baptism. Without this plank of safety, O sinner, you will not land on the shores of heaven but will sink for ever into the abyss of hell !

O how bitterly do I deceive myself, if I seek to elude this holy Sacrament ! Give alms, nurse the sick, bury the dead ; fast, watch, pray ; chastise your body, deliver it to be burned ; shed an ocean of tears,—nothing of all this supplies confession, if it be in your power to receive that Sacrament.

Confession is necessary. God, in the new dispensation has attached to it the sinner's forgiveness.

Having once committed to his priests the power to bind or to loose, it is the will of God that no sin can be pardoned without their intervention.

In vain would the Church have received from Christ the power of the keys, if sinners were free to enter the heavenly nuptial hall by any other way than the door she opens for them

We well know that there are courts of law here below, before whose presiding judges certain culprits are tried, and either acquitted or condemned. In like manner, no sinner can ignore or elude the divinely-appointed tribunal of God.

Finally, the Father hath committed all judgment to the Son (John 5 : 22) ; hence there is no forgiveness of sin, except through him. In his turn, the Son commits all his power to the Apostles and their successors, and sends them as the Father has sent him. Hence there is no forgive-

ness of sin, except through the Apostles and their successors, the priests of the Holy Catholic Church, the dispensers of the mysteries of God. (1. Cor. 4 : 1.)

And if this Sacrament were not the necessary condition of salvation, why is it that people have confessed from the beginning, and still continue to confess their sins ?

I, therefore, reject whatever my pride, or false shame, opposes to this saving institution. And though its use be ever so difficult, I must and will use it. Shall I seek to abolish what Christ has instituted ? Can I change the conditions to which it has pleased the Lord to attach his pardon ?

It belongs to the offended party, not to the offender, to prescribe the conditions of renewed friendship and favor. Yes, my soul,—Go and show yourself to the priest. (Matt. 8 : 4.)

Fear not. Let him see that ugly leprosy of sin, which is consigning you to rottenness and decay. Say : O representative of Christ, the divine worker of miracles,—stretch forth thy hand and heal me. If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. (Luke 5 : 12.) Only say the word, and my soul shall be healed. (Mt. 8 : 8.) O most powerful Judge, prostrate at thy feet, I confess my guilt. Exercise in me the mild justice of him who so often hath said upon earth : Thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace.

He that hideth his sins, shall not prosper : but he that shall confess, and forsake them, shall obtain mercy. (Prov. 28 : 13) I believe this, and cheerfully accept the divine conditions.

29.

THE CONSOLATION OF THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all iniquity." (1. John 1 : 9.)

Why should I not love what is necessary, if, at the same time, it is not only useful, but even pleasant and consoling ?

Penetrate more deeply into the essence of confession, and you will discover a sweetness, a utility, which will do away altogether with the apparent bitterness of the remedy. To confess one's sins is but to uncover one's wounds to a skilful physician.

Closed and covered wounds are dangerous, and threaten to become incurable. The poison must come out, the corruption must be removed, if we hope for a cure. Are not closed wounds also more painful ?

Confession, therefore, is so natural, so healing a medicine of the soul, that the Creator of the human heart himself must be recognized as its Author and its Founder.

Unbosoming one's self, communication with one's kind, especially in grief and helpless misery, is a necessity of the human heart. What is more oppressive and galling, what more voraciously gnaws the inmost life of the soul, than secret grief, hidden guilt ? To be able to unbosom one's self, to pour out the heart, to disclose the entire woe, to

seek sympathy, to ask advice ; that is what eases the sufferer, and often effects his cure.

You tell me, that an insult has been offered to you,—that you have suffered a loss : I can weep with you—but I cannot undo what has been done. But, communicate the misfortune of your soul to the priest : the very communication is, in itself, a cure.

When the words : Thy sins are forgiven thee ; go in peace ! reach the penitent heart, how quickly it revives, how full it becomes of consolation and peace, how marvelously it is restored to its former state of innocence !

The sword of Damocles no longer hangs over our heads, suspended by a single hair. We tremble no longer at those awful words, written on the wall by the mysterious hand : Numbered, weighed in the balance, rejected. (Dan. 5 : 25.) God is again our Father ; we are his people ; heaven is our inheritance, and eternity of happiness is assured to us.—The mercies of the Lord that we are not consumed. (Lam. 3 : 22.)

Tears may flow, sighs may arise from the (just-now) heavy-laden soul ; but its tears are no longer bitter, its sighs are no longer suffocating ; its entire grief runs more quietly through the peaceful channels of hope, until it empties, at last, into the ocean of fullest contentment and never-changing bliss.

Other things besides the evil of sin, find alleviation and support in this blessed institution of Penance.

Come to me, all you that labor, and are heavy laden. (Matt. 11 : 28.)

The world consoles not ; Jesus has not directed us to it, in our natural sufferings. I will refresh you. (Matt. 11 : 28.) He invites us to himself—yes, to himself—even in his representative, to the comforter and counsellor who sits in God's place.

The world deals only with the gay and prosperous, with the votaries of joy and noisy pleasure. In suffering and sorrow, it offers nothing but gloom ; it turns its back upon the mourner, it shuns and hates him. Yea, the world is the viper that wounds and poisons ; it is the angry caustic that burns and scorches. Its ingratitude, its infidelity, its overbearing contempt inflict upon our sore hearts the deepest and most painful of wounds

Jesus is our Saviour ; he heals through himself, he heals and saves through his representatives. Jesus heals all ; Jesus heals gently. Jesus heals thoroughly, radically ; Jesus heals gloriously ; the wounds he heals, leave behind no ignominious scars ;—on the contrary, they sparkle with heavenly radiance, they spread abroad a delicious odor

And when confession has healed the ulcers of our sins, it protects the penitent soul from new wounds.

It teaches man to take care of himself. And it fills him with a salutary bashfulness. By that very means, it restrains him from exposing himself to fresh shame and confusion.

Confession prepares the way for virtue. It is confession that digs deep and lays in the hidden foundation, that first and most necessary corner-stone : Humility—humility, through self-examination ; humility, through self-accusation ; humility, through the sentence, be it loosing or binding.

Confession brings light.

The passions envelop the mind with the darkness of night ; the world deceives and flatters ; false friends blind. The sinner, on his part, makes the darkness denser ; he hates to remove the cover from the abyss ; he flees reflection, he dulls the voice of conscience, he seeks distraction. Rushing continually into fresh pleasures, he raises fresh clouds of dust, which veil and conceal him more and more from himself.

The tribunal of Penance is the grave of the passions, the seat of impartial justice, the throne of truth.

There, the world is silenced ; there, only God faith, and grace speak to the soul.

In the place of lying friends, stands the disinterested defender of the holy rights of God and of one's much-abused immortal soul. The clouds are scattered ; their whirling is dissipated ; heaven and heavenly things are once more visible; and again the rays of the Sun of Justice shine gloriously into the heart.

And, not only are our own obscure prejudices and those of evil advisers cleared up, but the shadows which darkened our faith are also removed ; and there fall, as it were, the scales of personal malice from the penitent's eyes. Faith becomes more lively, is reanimated,—and love, once more, enkindled. The diseased soul is restored to health ; and the repentant sinner renews his youth, like the eagle.

Confession brings strength.

Violent are the passions ; upon their stormy billows, the frail bark of our heart is tossed aimlessly to and fro,—at last, either to be dashed to pieces on the cliffs, or sunk for ever into the bottomless abyss.

Now, a good confession strengthens against these passions ; some of them, it abates by the oil of divine mercy,—others, it subjects to the control of a wise and prudent captain.

O yes,—God well knew the poor heart of man. The means he offers, are always proportionate to the end.

The passions find support in occasions of sin—in the companionship of perverse friends, who only too readily speak the language of vice—in societies dedicated to the service of concupiscence.

Confession breaks these fetters ; it warns, it reaches forth the noble, helping hand ; it knits more closely the blessed bonds of God.

The passions thrive in the tumult of distractions, of

thoughtlessness, superficiality, in the vortex of every-day life—in the cyclone of business.

Confession leads man back to himself ; it introduces him into the eternal truths of faith ; it awakens old memories of better times, points us to a better world. Confession rebuilds the bridge between this world and the world to come ; it brings the crooked, turbulent stream of life to a stand-still, in order to give it again a heavenly direction.

The blessings of confession even extend from the penitent to his fellow-men. It restores ill-gotten goods, heals dissensions, reconciles enemies, repairs old scandals, and prevents new ones, separates evil associates, protects property, honor, reputation, and innocence, forces the proud and overbearing into becoming limits, and lifts up the down-trodden.

It brings fidelity, order, peace, and love into the family ; —security, patriotism, and subjection into the state ;—it makes all mankind a family of penitents, which it really is, and must be, so long as it acknowledges Adam and Eve as its first parents.

O blessed means of salvation, O treasury of ineffable goods ! Truly, God is faithful and just, to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all iniquity, if we confess them. (1. John 1 : 6.) Moreover, he enlightens us, strengthens us, and fills us with consolation, and in our recovered peace of mind, he gives us a foretaste of heaven.

How good it would be, young man, if you would seriously reflect upon, and take to heart, these blessings ! Would confession be then a torture to you ? Would the command of duty, alone, drive you to the Sacrament of reconciliation ? Would you perform that holy action with repugnance, carelessness, levity, or, perhaps, even with perverse or hypocritical intentions ?

30.

CONFESSION IS EASY.

"*Wilt thou be made whole? . . . Arise . . . and walk. And immediately, the man was made whole.*'
(John 5. : 7, 8, 9.)

Sweet as are the fruits of Penance, just as easy it is to pluck them.

You do not believe this? And yet, you must concede it, if you consider what sin is, what God is, and what you have deserved for your rebellion. What conditions for pardon might not an offended God have exacted of us! What painful steps have sometimes to be taken in order to effect a reconciliation with our fellow-men.

Does human justice content itself with a bare avowal of guilt, with a mere appearance of penitence.

Public proceedings, infamy, torture, chains, prison, privations of every sort, the rope, the axe, and the sword, invest temporal courts with terror and horror.

Are you dragged into the confessional with violence? Do you there meet an angry judge? All is secret, all is goodness, mildness, and love; and afterwards, no more reproaches,—no prison, no hangman's hand,—on the contrary, overwhelmed with honors and friendship, justified, ennobled, you depart from this tribunal, wherein you were mercifully permitted to be culprit, accuser, and witness, all in one.

I the sinner, am alone at the bar. I speak in my own cause. I am heard, and my testimony is decisive. No black calumnies, no bitter misrepresentations, can enter here : species, number, circumstances, intentions of my sins—as I know them, as I present them, so they are accepted ; no one here exaggerates, or produces false witnesses. I am believed. I have nothing to do with any one but the judge.

And this judge is favorably inclined to me from the beginning. His kindness grows with the confidence which I place in him—with the necessity in which I am.—And justice is mildness. The representative of him who refused to break the bruised reed, or quench the smoking flax, will certainly use his best endeavors to raise me up and revive my drooping spirit.—Being human himself, he is conscious of human weakness. And he never forgets that, (like his divine Master,) his mission, above all, is to seek and to save that which was lost. (Luke 19 : 10.)

It is true, he is a judge, and as such, has to guard the requirements of Eternal Justice ; but—if the penitent be sincere and contrite, if he be really in such dispositions as to deserve the sentence of absolution and salvation,—the judge is always indulgent ; his is a sentence of grace, of life.

How difficult it often is to regain the forfeited favor of an offended prince ! What lengthy negotiations, what humiliations, what proofs of submission, and of a changed sentiment ! Those that surround the prince must first be gained. Only arduously and gradually, the way to the throne is cleared. One must wait for an opportunity ; and then, perhaps, a public confession, a bending of the knee, an obsequious apology—and withal—uncertainty of success

But here—one simple, penitent, private approach to God's representative, or rather to God himself, and you

can be convinced in advance, that he forgives the humble offender willingly and entirely.

If God should require of me to fast for years to come ; or, for the remainder of my life, to make pilgrimages to the uttermost parts of the earth ; if he should demand sacrifices of all sorts ; if, as the price of reconciliation, he should demand all my substance, my honor and dignities, the dearest and most precious thing in my possession—what would remain to me but to pay this price, in order to recover the desired, absolutely-necessary favor of the King of heaven and earth ?

But no ; a simple avowal, a voluntary humiliation, a sincere satisfaction ! O my God, how easy thou hast made for me what thou couldst justly have made so difficult ! Why, even speak of difficulty, since there is here question of an offense of an infinite kind ?

What is confession compared with hell, which I have deserved by one mortal sin ? What, in contrast to the hundredfold hell which I have deserved by a hundred mortal sins ?

There—eternal confusion, eternal reproach, eternal torment,—and after all, no remission, no forgiveness.—Here, in the tribunal of Penance, a brief shame, a passing reproof, a moment's difficulty—and then—pardon, reconciliation, consolation, joy, peace, for ever, provided I do not relapse.

Either to confess, or to burn, which is easier ?

Suppose your house is on fire—if you could save it, if you could not only extinguish the conflagration but even repair all damages by pouring on a little water from a brook near by—would you not be glad to go and fetch it ? Would you not regard such means as most easy and desirable ?

By confession, you quench hell-fire,

Again—you owe many millions of dollars ; but, suppose your creditor agrees, that the immediate payment of a single gold coin will satisfy him for the whole debt. Would you not hasten with eagerness to embrace his offer ?

God is your creditor—confession is the coin he accepts for your immense debt of sin. Hasten to pay it .

In a dense forest, you meet a savage beast ; no escape, no weapon for defense ! The animal is about to rush upon you. Suppose you could put it to flight by a single word—how easy and desirable would you not consider such a means ?

By confession, you put to flight that fiercest of wild beasts —Satan—who goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

You are deadly sick. A skilful doctor says : Wilt thou be made whole ? One little word : " Yes," will give you life and health again. Would you hesitate to say it ?

This is the question Jesus asks you, O sick and long-suffering soul !—" Wilt thou be made whole ?" And you will not say : " Yes" ? You will not go to confession and hear the consoling words : Arise and walk ? You refuse the opportunity of recovering your health again ?

O, how inexcusable, how unjustifiable it would be, to reject so easy a means, not to be willing to do even so little for so great a reward !

Suppose, that confession were even something hard, something very difficult,—yea, in particular cases the most difficult thing that could be imagined—can you expect an efficacious medicine to be always palatable ? Are not the best of remedies sometimes the most bitter ?

The remedy must be proportioned to the malady. Every sin must be repented of, confessed, if the sinner would hope for pardon.

When your neighbor has offended you, do you forgive

without being asked to do so ?—without being convinced that the offender desires, as far as in him lies, to undo his wicked deed, and never again repeat his offense ?

The least that can be required for a reconciliation, is surely a sorrowful acknowledgment of having done wrong.

Yes, confession is a medicine,—a heavenly medicine, prepared from the blood of Christ himself.

Medicine—heavenly in its universality, suitable for every imaginable sickness of the soul,—for every age, every state, and every disposition of the mind.

Medicine—heavenly in its efficacy ; it never loses its strength, curing even chronic maladies.

Medicine—heavenly in its simplicity. Bring true contrition, accuse yourself sincerely ;—immediately, on the instant, the leprosy of the soul is gone, leaving no trace behind.

Medicine— offered by heavenly generosity. What does it cost you, what have you to pay for it ? Nothing. There it is—prepared—ready to be taken. It flows from the cross of Jesus. Take it, and let it trickle on your wounds. Do you plead that you cannot get this remedy ? How many priests are there every where, how many physicians of the soul to be had for the seeking ! They will receive you with open arms, if you go to them ; they will come to you gladly, if you call them ; they will do everything, and must do everything, for Christ's sake, for heaven's reward, with self-sacrifice, without self-interest. And they are equally accessible to all, to poor and rich, high and lowly, learned and ignorant. All have a claim on them, all have a right to their help and assistance.

Where, then, are your excuses, young man ?

Be not deceived. Really, believe me, there is, or there can be, but one thing that keeps your from confession, and

makes it unpalatable to you : The fear of amendment, the fear of a radical change of life !

31.

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE.

"*If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.*" (1. Cor. 11 : 31.)

An exact, and as far as possible, entire accusation—such as is necessary in the tribunal of Penance—cannot be thought of without a previous, careful examination of conscience.

If something grievous escapes your memory in confession, because of the culpable negligence, or levity of your preparation, the sin is your own. You have abused the holy Sacrament of Penance.

You must, therefore, examine your conscience in advance with seriousness and diligence. You must devote to this business, at least that care which prudence and your own interest prompt you to give to every affair of importance.

Free from anxiety and scrupulosity, as well as from haste and superficiality, you must prepare yourself for confession in a manner corresponding to the dignity of the Sacrament and your own greater spiritual advantage.

O divine Spirit, enlighten with thy celestial rays the darkness of my guilty heart !

O come, penetrate into the secret, involved recesses of my multiplied sins of thought and desire, of word, of action, of omission !

Let not this blessed medicine of confession be changed for me into poison ! Let not this sovereign balsam be useless to me, because I refuse to apply it to my secret wounds !

Drive away this foolish self-love which is here so lamentably out of place. Sad though the sight may be, show me to myself as I was, and alas ! as I am !

Reveal to me, I pray, not only my sinful wanderings, but also the sources of my miseries and faults ; the connection of one fault with the other ; and, above all, my predominant passion or vice.

Have pity on my youth, and help me to unravel these meshes of my passions, which threaten to ensnare me.

Enlighten the priest to whom I commit myself, the director of my soul, that not only as judge, but more especially and chiefly as a spiritual surgeon, he may operate upon, and benefit my soul.

And then, O divine light of grace, warm my heart, soften it, fructify it ; awaken in it a penitential spirit and a holy resolution, henceforth to be more faithful in following the will of God, in avoiding evil and practising virtue, and in availing myself of the necessary and useful means to salvation.

Yes, create a clean heart in me : and renew a right spirit within my bowels. (Ps. 50 : 12.) Lead me again into my long-lost, heavenly path, which shall conduct me safely to my God and Creator !

In the examination of conscience, very much depends on order, which, if observed, renders the so-called table of sins superfluous.

There are the ten commandments of God, the six pre-

cepts of the Church. Going through these, examine whether, and how, you have sinned against each, in thought, ord, deed, omission, or desire.

Or, think of your duties towards God, towards your neighbor, towards yourself. Examine how it was with your prayers, with the service of God on Sundays,—did you always hear Mass? Then, what about your conduct towards your superiors, your equals, your inferiors? Have you conscientiously fulfilled the duties of your state of life? Have you faithfully practised the virtues which God demands of you :—chastity, temperance, honesty, veracity, mildness, meekness, patience?

Or—(and this is especially the case with those who approach the Sacraments more frequently) : Examine each day in the past month, fortnight, or week, as the case may be—see what has happened ; think of the places you have frequented ; the persons with whom you have conversed ; the recreations you have taken ; the business you have transacted.

Enter, as far as you can, into the number of mortal sins, and do not forget such circumstances as change the species of, or aggravate, the sin. Pay particular attention also to those offenses whereby you participated in, or caused the sins of others.

Moreover, ask yourself, whether your last confession was really a good one ; whether you conscientiously fulfilled the penance imposed on you ; whether you have made restitution, repaired damages ; whether you have avoided the proximate occasion of this or that particular sin ; and if you have made use of the means recommended to you.

Take care to make this examination of your conscience in the presence of the thrice-holy, omniscient God—in the presence of him who searcheth the reins and hearts

(Apoc. 2 : 23) ; in whose sight the stars are not pure (Job 25 : 5) ; who searcheth Jerusalem with lanterns,—yes, from whom there is no appeal or concealment, before whom nothing can be disguised, forgotten, or extenuated.

There is really no use for you to dissemble ; you well know that, one day, you must stand before the judgment-seat of God. It is appointed for all men to die, and after that, judgment. Now, then, imagine that you are actually standing this moment before that awful tribunal, just as you are, covered with sin and shame—what would be the issue ? Heaven or hell ? God grant the first,—but, very probably, judging by your present state, it would be the latter. O, why do you, who love others, hate yourself so much ? Are you not your own greatest enemy ? How long will you abuse the mercy of God, and expose yourself to the imminent danger of damnation ? Can you not anticipate the terrible judgment, and open now (as I adjure you, in all sincerity, to do,) that fatal book wherein all your thoughts, words, and works are inscribed in indelible characters ?

Truly, if you would judge yourself, you would not be judged. (1. Cor. 11 : 31.)

Hence, as you love yourself—have courage ! Look into your heart, enter at once into yourself ; open the windows, let in the light ; leave no corner unsearched—dive into the most secret folds of the heart.

O young man, do not think me impertinent when I tell you : Be conscientious. Do not deceive yourself. Above all things : Dare not attempt to deceive God !

32.

CONTRITION.

"*A contrite and humble heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.*"
(Ps. 50 : 19.)

Do not imagine that the examination of conscience is the chief thing in the reception of the Sacrament of Penance. The main point is the Contrition.

In case of necessity, contrition can even supply for confession ; and if the contrition be perfect, the justification of the sinner even precedes the absolution of the priest.

Without contrition, no pardon. This is founded in the nature of sin, which is a turning from God and a turning to the creature—hence, perversity, disorder.

The heart must be torn from the creature and turned back to God. This separation is necessarily attended with pain. Conversion to God cannot be thought of without detestation of the object which first alienated us from him.

Contrition, therefore, is a grief of the soul, a detestation of sin, the wish to undo it, the will to repair the evil, and the purpose to sin no more.

Contrition must be interior ; otherwise, it is no grief of the soul. You must be really sorry for having been so unfortunate as to sin.

A sensible sorrow which manifests itself outwardly by sighs and tears, or which clings to set words, is not necessary. Even without tears and without the fetters of a set

prayer, contrition may be sincere. Rend your hearts, and not your garments, and turn to the Lord your God. (Joel 2 : 13.)

If you use a certain form of words, you must make earnest efforts of the will, in order to apply to your soul the full sense of the words. The mere recital does not suffice.

Since by every mortal sin we lose heaven and deserve hell, since every mortal sin most grievously offends God, the highest and most amiable Good, our contrition must be universal,—that is, it must extend to all mortal sins.

Though but one single mortal sin be unrepented of, your contrition is profitless. The motive of contrition for one grievous sin, is also the motive of contrition for every other.

Can a man be at one and the same time the friend and enemy of God? Such would be the case with him who claims to be a penitent, and still remains attached to a favorite mortal sin. Have a care, then, lest that favorite sin withdraw you beyond the bounds of contrition!

Again, your contrition must be proportionate to the evil of sin, as well as to the end which you desire to attain.

The greater the evil caused by sin, the greater must be your contrition. Now, sin is the evil of evils. Nothing causes greater damage than sin; hence, the sorrow which we excite in ourselves therefor, must be exceedingly great —yea (if it were possible), infinite, since sin, in a certain sense, is an infinite evil.

He who does not detest sin as the greatest, nay, as the only real evil, has utterly failed to comprehend its essence, and cannot be said to possess true contrition.

This most necessary and exceeding-great sorrow proceeds not from the mind, but depends upon and is the product of the will.

The end of contrition is reconciliation with God. The repentant sinner desires to recover the divine grace and

friendship, to become capable of the future possession of an eternal supernatural happiness.

Necessarily, then, none save a supernatural means can correspond to this supernatural end. Contrition must be supernatural ; it must be based upon, and must proceed from, grace ; must flow from supernatural motives, such as : The loss of God's friendship, eternal happiness forfeited, eternal torments deserved, the infinite majesty and goodness of God offended and outraged by sin.

O, that I could always be sorry for my sins with a perfect contrition ! O, that I could divest my sorrow of all personal motives, or at least be guided therein only by the love of God ! True, I know, that attrition, or a supernatural, imperfect contrition, suffices for the valid reception of the Sacrament of Penance ; but, O God, O highest and most amiable Good, God of truth and beauty, of power and holiness, the consideration that I have resisted, offended, and outraged thee, should effectually banish from my heart every other less generous and less perfect sentiment.

What is the possession of heaven compared to thy honor, O my God ? Thou alone art holy, thou alone art Lord, thou alone art the Most High, my King and my sovereign Master !

Can the thought of any personal damage affect me when there is question of the violation of thy rights ? O Lord, give me, then, this perfect contrition, this unselfish contrition,—this contrition of love, whereby I become a sacrifice to the Lord, containing nothing of myself ; for, according to the words of the Psalmist : A sacrifice to thee is an afflicted spirit : a contrite and humble heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. (Ps. 50 : 19.)

Let us, then, lay great stress upon contrition, and excite ourselves thereto by those perfect, as well as imperfect, motives which originate from love, grounding thereupon our

purpose of amendment for the future. Such contrition belongs to the preparation for confession ; at all events, it must be acquired before absolution, and in view of the confession to be made, with which it must be allied by the will.

Sometimes, it seems difficult to make from the heart a true act of contrition. Well, let us pray for the proper dispositions. God, who desires our conversion, wills also the means of that conversion. Even though he does not at once inflame our hearts with perfect contrition, he always grants the grace of prayer, whereby we can arrive at the grace of contrition.

The consideration of natural motives very often leads up to the supernatural, conducing thereby to a contrite disposition. Reflect, for example, upon the inherent disgrace attached to many a sin ; upon the fatal consequences so often entailed upon health, property, and honor. What remorse of conscience ! What oppressive self-reproach ! What a shocking contrast to virtue, which frequently meets its reward even here below ! O, how odious is every sin, in as far as it contravenes reason and the eternal law of God. How terrible, are its temporal punishments ! Death and judgment,—alas ! perhaps, so near ! Eternity ? Hell ? Purgatory ? What about the lost Paradise with its everlasting glory ?—the society of the Saints ?—God, the highest and most perfect Good ? O what rebellion ! what ingratitude ! Has God deserved this from me ?—To him, I owe all that I possess, in the order of nature and in the order of grace. O most amiable heart of Jesus ! O saving Cross ! O Lamb of God sacrificed upon the Altar, or dwelling in the holy Tabernacle ! O divine, infinite perfections, before whose splendor my sins appear as so many black shadows of hell ! . . .

My God, I am confounded, and ashamed to lift up my

face to thee : for my iniquities are multiplied over my head, and my sins are grown up even unto heaven. (1. Esdras 9 : 6.) Pardon, O God of love, an erring youth, who desires from the bottom of his heart to return to thee !

Not only on account of hell—which I am conscious of having deserved—not only on account of the lost right to heaven and its everlasting happiness, but for thy sake, O highest, best, and loveliest Good, God of grace, beauty, majesty and glory, I am sorry for all the sins I have committed in thought, word, deed, or omission ! O that I could undo all the evil I have done, and wash away my ingratitude with my tears, yea, with my blood !

Pardon me for having so shamefully desecrated my youth, and for having robbed thee and myself of those very years which, for my own good, were justly due to thee !

Henceforth, thou shalt behold in me an obedient child. To thee, shall be consecrated the remnant of my youth and the whole of my future life. To-day, I devote it to piety and purity, meekness, patience, obedience, and the love of my neighbor.

I am resolved to repair every mistake, to correct every error, to avoid every sin and every occasion of sin, and to employ all the means of amendment. Lord, give me the grace, and assist my poor, weak endeavors ! Grant that, henceforth, I may love thee above all, and never be separated from thee again ! Amen, Amen.

33.

A FIRM PURPOSE OF AMENDMENT.

"*I have sworn, and am determined to keep the judgments of thy justice.*" (Ps. 118 : 106.)

Contrition necessarily implies a firm purpose of amendment.

The sin which we have detested shall not be repeated—and, in general, nothing in any way contrary to the holy will of God, must be done.

This resolute will is absolutely necessary to obtain pardon. Without a sincere hatred of sin, there is no pardon ; and without a firm purpose of advoiding sins, there is no real hatred of it.

This firm purpose of amendment may, however, exist in spite of a certain dread that our reformation may not, perhaps, be lasting.

You do well, however, to combat this fear. Yes, banish all thought of a relapse, and yield not to cowardly apprehensions. A relapse, of course, is possible, but it is all the more improbable, the more confidently you throw yourself into the arms of grace.

Remember, that you can do all things in him that strengthens you (Phil. 4 : 13) ; and that God will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able. (1. Cor. 1 : 103.)

Let your resolution be heartfelt. It is not words, but the will, that gives it force. I have sworn, and I am determined to keep the judgments of thy justice. (Ps. 118 : 106.)

Let your purpose of amendment be firm. Cost what it will—I must change, and become another man. Especially, such and such a thing shall never occur. Who shall separate me from the love of Christ ? Shall tribulation ? or distress ? or famine ? or nakedness ? or danger ? or persecution ? or the sword ? (Rom. 8 : 35.)

Let your resolution be universal. It must include all your past sins. If you exclude even one mortal sin, your conversion is a delusion. In like manner, if your resolution covers only a certain period of time, and not the whole future, it is useless.

Let your resolution be active or efficacious. Not only resolve to sin no more, but also employ the means to avoid the occasions of sin, and to repair what is to be repaired. Purpose to labor earnestly for the extirpation of your unruly passions and sinful inclinations.

Finally, your resolution, like your contrition, should be supernatural. It must spring from a motive above nature, born of the life of grace. God, above all, must be satisfied ; my soul must be rendered secure ; it is a question of escaping hell and of meriting heaven. Eternity, O my God ! I had in my mind the eternal years. (Ps. 76 : 6.) Why should I not do violence to myself for a little while, in order, afterwards, to enjoy for ever the blessed fruits of my self-abnegation ?

Your favorite sin or your predominant passion, my dear young friend, causes you the greatest difficulty. You love it, and it loves you. It seems to you, perhaps, difficult, or even impossible, to quit it for all time to come. It is hard for you to resolve to avail yourself of all the means of laboring for your deliverance ; to free yourself at every cost,—to lay the axe to the root, and extirpate it from your heart !

And yet, your purpose of amendment must aim just at this —your favorite sin, your predominant passion. That is the

chain which binds you most strongly to the service of the devil.

O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt? (Matt. 1 : 31.) Does not your Saviour stretch out his hand to you? And what is not an earnest will able to do? The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence; and the violent bear it away (Matt. 11 : 12); that is, those of firm will, whose will shows itself in action, are sure of salvation.

Lord, I will,—I am in earnest! With thy assistance, I shall accomplish even that which is seemingly impossible. I count upon thine aid; for, at this moment, more than ever (when my past life and my present wretchedness are so vividly before me), I am conscious of my own impotence and helplessness. With confidence, I look up to thee, the mountains from whence help shall come to me. (Ps. 120 : 1.)

And now, young man, faithfully keep the promise made to God. Let your pledged word be sacred. You have said: I will. Let your will become a fact. Put your hand to the plough at once. Prove your honesty and nobility of mind in your dealings with God. Have courage! Have confidence! The Lord of hosts is with you, because of your good will; the God of Jacob is your protector. (Ps. 45 : 8.)

34.

SINCERE CONFESSION.

"*Be not ashamed to confess thy sins.*" (Ecclus. 4 : 31.)

Oh, it is most difficult to confess my sins to the priest! I am well aware that this confession is necessary,—because thou, O Lord, hast put the priest in thy place as judge, and he cannot judge unless I sincerely and entirely confess

to him all my bad thoughts,words, and deeds. But my whole being rises in rebellion against this humiliation, and an intolerable sense of shame takes possession of me !

My son ! exactly in this, lies the beginning of the satisfaction which you owe. Submit to this humiliation in the spirit of penance ; bear this shame in atonement for the shamelessness with which you formerly violated my commandments. Do you not perceive the temptation of the Evil One ? He restores to you, now, the shame of which he robbed you at the moment of your fall.

But, O Lord, what will the priest think of me ? So young, and already so deeply immersed in all wickedness ! Sins upon sins—mortal, manifold, numberless ! And those secret sins, those bad thoughts, desires, and actions, which shun the light of day ! O youthful monster ! O truly prodigal son ! O withered branch, fit only for the eternal flames of hell !

Dear child, my minister will think none of these things. Perhaps, he may shudder at the sight of your gaping wounds; but his paternal heart will sympathize with the sorrow which overpowers you. With every fresh wound that you disclose to him, his pity will increase for you, O poor one ; his love will grow for you, O sick one ; his desire to save you, O unfortunate one, will strengthen. Behold ! I myself have sent forth this good Samaritan upon the road of Jericho and have supplied him with wine and oil for my wounded and abandoned ones—and for you, in particular. Does he not know that he is in my place—I, who am all mercy and love, and who cover the sins of the repentant ? (Ps. 84 : 3.) Can he forget that he himself is a man, and that he has often had need of my mercy, yea, even now needs it ? Is there even a single sin among those which you have now to confess, of which he may not have been guilty, or of which he may not yet be guilty ? Does he not also carry his treas-

ure in an earthen vessel, in constant danger of losing it? (2. Cor. 4 : 7.) He is aware of all this, and, therefore, he is inclined to sympathy, mildness, and indulgence.

But, O Lord, what if that wicked life which I have hitherto led should become public?

My son, you fear the impossible. I, who have instituted this Sacrament, also watch over it, that it may remain inviolate and unabused. Remember my holy martyr, St. John Nepomucen, slain centuries ago, the victim of sacramental silence, whose still-uncorrupted tongue announces the inviolate character of the seal of the Confessional. And believe me, there would be as many St. Johns as there are priests throughout the world, should any arrogant power tempt them to such an outrageous betrayal of confidence and divine trust.

Then, my child, approach at once this sacred tribunal. Grace has paved you the road thither; grace accompanies you, grace awaits you there, and grace will lead you away from it, triumphant and justified.

Be not ashamed to confess thy sins. (Ecclus. 4 : 31.) Let your confession be plain, intelligible, and humble—as is becoming to such a heavy debtor. Above all, let it be as sincere and entire as possible. Give, as far as you can, the number of times you have committed a mortal sin; do not conceal any circumstance which may change the nature of a sin, or considerably increase its malice. Confess, also, all your wilful sinful thoughts, desires, imaginations, plans, and projects.

Know, that I search your heart thoroughly. In vain, would you try to keep this or that fold of it hidden from me; it lies open before my eyes; dissimulation is impossible. Do not draw down upon yourself fresh guilt, instead of pardon, a curse instead of a blessing, increased torture of conscience instead of peace. Think of the consequences of ill-

timed reticence and false shame ;—fresh sins : sacrilege, perversion of the means of grace into poison, obstinacy, hardness of heart, final impenitence, and the awful torments of hell !

Do you prefer to wait to the Last Day to have your secret sins brought to light, and to be put to shame and confusion before the whole world ? Would this be better than private confession to a priest, bound to secrecy, vowed to carry your confidence with him to the grave ?

O Lord ! be it so. Encouraged by thy word, I will be my own accuser. To thee, in the person of the priest, I will confess my iniquities. Lo ! already thy gracious pardon draws near to me ; and thou hast forgiven the wickedness of my sins. (Ps. 31 : 5.)

35.

GENERAL CONFESSION.

"*I will recount to thee all my years in the bitterness of my soul.*" (Is. 38 : 15.)

There are various kinds of confessions.

The ordinary confession dates from the last valid one.

The general confession embraces either the whole past life, or a greater portion of it.

If any one is certain, or has a well-grounded fear, that his former confessions were invalid, he must make a confession reaching back to the time of his last valid confession.

A confession may be invalid on the part of the penitent,

either because the preceding examination of conscience was sinfully hurried and insufficient ; or, because there was no true contrition, such as the Sacrament requires ; or, because the purpose of amendment was not earnest and firm ; or finally, because the accusation was knowingly and wilfully incomplete.

Culpably gross ignorance ; self-deception in regard to the confessor chosen ; a defective will in regard to reconciliation, restitution of money, or good name, or indemnity for scandal given ; in regard to bad company and proximate occasions ; uninterrupted relapse into the old grievous sins ; continuance for years in the worst habits,—any, or all these, make us fear that our confessions were either invalid, or, at least, very doubtful.

A good general confession puts an end to such a disturbed state of conscience, and secures the salvation of the soul, as far as regards the past.

A good general confession, therefore, is very consoling, because it is a total rupture with the past, and a milestone, as it were, marking the beginning of a new life.

A good general confession is especially sure to console and comfort you on your death-bed, since it clears up the records of your past life, and leaves you without anxiety for the old accounts.

And now, look at the general run of young men. Reflect how many of them, for years, have gone to confession from compulsion or through habit, without care or fervor, without sincerity and amendment of life.

Would it not be highly salutary, if they would once check themselves in their wild career, once recollect themselves ; extricate themselves from the maze of their accumulated short-comings, examine every nook and corner of their consciences, and sincerely beg pardon of God for their poor, sinful youth ?

A welcome opportunity of making such a confession is offered to the young man at any turning-point of his life, as, when he goes to college, when he experiences an interior call, or when any important event warns him to attend to his soul, and thoroughly adjust the disordered affairs of his conscience.

And though a general confession should not be necessary to you, because, hitherto, you have always been exact in discharging your spiritual duties, it will surely be useful to you, unless you be of the number of the scrupulous and needlessly-anxious ones to whom obedience to their confessors is more expedient than general confessions.

A good general confession conduces to a greater self-knowledge. There, you perceive how far you are from, or how near you are to, your end ;—what has been done, what is yet to be done ;—how your passions develop and intertwine themselves,—how successfully or how fruitlessly you have hitherto labored at their extirpation. A certain portion of your youth is already gone : if your mind is unbiased, you can, from the consideration of the past, form an accurate judgment of whether or not it will be safe for you to continue in your present way of life—whether it leads upwards to heaven, or downwards to hell.

Such a retrospect produces greater contrition, because it reveals a longer catalogue of sin. It excites a firmer purpose of amendment, because it perceives how little has as yet been done for heaven ; it awakens a more lively desire of a holy life, because it lays bare wounds, which, in time, might become incurable ; it is a check upon levity, because the impression made by such an accumulation of miseries, cannot possibly be other than a grave and serious one.

The sweetest rest and consolation are the result. One feels as if newly-born, and courageously begins the amendment of life, knowing that God hath cast all his sins behind his back, (Is. 38 ; 17.)

Ask experience. For how many has a good general confession been the beginning of a new life ?

They said : O God, I will recount to thee all my years in the bitterness of my soul. (Is. 38 : 15.) And then : I said now have I begun (Ps. 76 : 11.) the work of amendment.

There are even many devout persons who either for their own personal advantage and consolation, or for the honor and glory of God, make, from time to time—for example, from year to year—such a retrospect, such an extraordinary confession, in order, after it, to advance with renewed fervor in the way of perfection and salvation

If you wish to make such confession, proceed in the following manner :

If possible, make a retreat for a few days before it. If you cannot wholly interrupt your ordinary occupations, spend at least, daily, a certain time in perfect retirement with God ; in prayer, spiritual reading, and examination of conscience.

Divide your life into given periods, and reflect how you have offended God, during those times, in thought, word, deed, or omission. How you have sinned against the commandments of God and the precepts of the Church ; against the duties of your state of life, and the virtues required of you.

Attend first only to the mortal sins ; the venial ones, you can more easily set in order.

When this more remote preparation is made, appoint an opportune time for the immediate one. Let your confessor know what you intend doing ; ask him to help you ; accuse yourself first of the sins you have committed since your last valid confession, and afterwards, of the others—as concisely as possible, but, also, as exactly as you can—in humility and compunction of heart.

O yes, in humility and compunction of heart : for, in

confession, contrition is of paramount importance. Can we be wanting in contrition when the sins of a life-time bear witness against us ?

Why, young man, do you shrink from this remedy which will be of such incalculable benefit to you ?

Is it your inconstancy which revolts against the severity and bitterness of that searching retrospect ? O then, indeed, you have great need of it ! Do you find it difficult to review your whole life, and bring it into order ? But you are yet so young ! Will a general confession of your life be any easier when years upon years have passed ?

Take courage. Do not ask whether it is difficult or not. If it is necessary, if it is salutary, and if it is profitable, why not do it ? Why not do it soon ? Why not do it at once ?

36.

SATISFACTION.

"*Cease to do perversely, learn to do well.*" (Is. 1 : 16, 17.)

There are reparations and restitutions to which certain sins, according to their nature, oblige us, and which are known by the generic term—Satisfaction.

The restoration of ill-gotten goods as well as of the good name and reputation of which we have deprived our neighbor, the repairing of scandal given—all these are holy duties which we must be ready and prompt to fulfil, the wilful neglect of which may render even absolution null and void.

The priest—as our divinely-appointed judge—imposes

upon us a penance, which is called the sacramental satisfaction.

To accept this penance, provided it be not unjust or unreasonable, is a duty, because the confessor has a right, nay, even an obligation to impose it: first, as a punishment for sin; second, as a remedy for the consequences of sin; and third, as a preservative against relapse into sin.

This penance appertains to the perfection of the Sacrament, although not to its essence; hence, to secure this important point it behooves both the dispenser and the receiver of the Sacrament, to be as careful as possible. It is, therefore, a strict duty to perform the penance imposed by the confessor.

In the Sacrament of Penance, God, in a wonderfully mysterious manner, changes the eternal punishment of the sinner into a temporal one.

A reconciliation takes place then and there. When two enemies are about to be reconciled, the one who is most in fault, is expected to make the first advance. God remits the eternal punishment, and you—O sinner!—dare you be so ungrateful and proud as to imagine that nothing should be required of you? You refuse to accept the trifling penance imposed on you? You delay to perform it, or you do so in a superficial and indolent manner?

Here there is question of the offended justice of God. Is he expected to renounce all his claims—or else, run the risk of being more despised and trampled under foot?

Old debts are not paid by not contracting new ones, but by actually liquidating them. In like manner, we pay our debt to the outraged justice of God by works of penance. Therefore, we must accept the penance imposed by the confessor, and perform it exactly—whether it be prayers, acts of mortification, or other pious practices

Perform your penance, then, promptly, punctually, and

with fervor. If you can perform it all immediately, do it at once, or, at least, before Communion, in order that it may not be forgotten. Acquit yourself of this sacramental penance with the greatest exactness, since it is most efficacious in freeing us from the remaining punishment due to remitted sin. A sacramental penance operates in an infallibly certain measure, known only to God, because it is imposed in virtue of the power of the keys.

If you delay performing your penance until you have relapsed into mortal sin, there is reason to fear that it will no longer effect the ends for which God intended it.

Under the head of Satisfaction, are included all the penitential works the sinner undertakes as an atonement for past sins, in order to obtain the remission of the temporal punishment yet due after the remission of the eternal punishment, and in union with the merits of Jesus Christ and his Saints, to fully appease the justice of the heavenly Father.

True, Christ has made superabundant satisfaction for our sins ; but it is only by penance that we can become sharers in that satisfaction.

He that suffers not with Christ, shall not be glorified with him. (Rom. 8 : 17.) Christ suffered as a penitent. He suffered—and suffered for me ; and shall I not be willing to suffer something for him ?

Through Christ, then, our penitential works become meritorious, yes, even expiatory. Nothing without Christ, and nothing without ourselves ! God has created us without our assistance, but he will not save us without our cooperation. We must suffer with him, in order to merit with him.

Add, then, to the sacramental penance, other voluntary works of devotion—works of self-denial, works of love, the spiritual and corporal works of mercy.

In view of your past imperfect satisfaction for sin, hence-

forth bear more patiently the daily trials and sufferings of life, the hardships incident to your special vocation. Especially you, my young friend, accept in the spirit of penance, with courage and enthusiasm, all the trials and difficulties attendant upon a daily and hourly warfare against your unruly passions,—against sensuality, ambition, anger, idleness, inconstancy, levity, and folly.

Decline not only from evil ; cease not only to do perversely, but learn also to do good, to practise works of justice and charity, and acquire merits for heaven.

37.

THE CONSOLATIONS OF A GOOD CONSCIENCE.

"*A secure mind is like a continual feast.*" (Prov. 15 : 15.)

How happy am I, O Lord, my God, because I am once more thy friend, thy child

I feel that thou art now near me.

No longer, do I behold thee as a stern judge, charging me with squandered benefits, despised graces, ingratitude, treachery, and rebellion ! Thou art reconciled to me—my interior consolation assures me of this fact !

This heart of mine, recently so poor, is now infinitely rich ; a short time ago, it was torn and crushed with grief and shame—now, it is composed and peaceful ; lately, it was so empty, lonely, and forsaken ; now, it overflows with the happy plenitude of the God-head, which satisfies it, which satiates it, and leaves nothing more to be desired.

Truly, they that fear the Lord, shall find him. (Ecclus. 6 : 16.) He permits himself to be found, and having been found, he blesses us and indemnifies us for all our trifling sacrifices. He forms with the soul a holy union, the fruits of which are : Peace, joy, and happiness.

How great is the multitude of thy sweetness, O Lord, which thou hast hidden for them that fear thee ! (Ps. 30 : 20.)

What a contrast between these quiet joys and the noisy amusements of the world ! How the filthy mire of iniquity pollutes the heart, while, on the other hand, the stream of the river maketh glad the city of God (Ps. 45: 4), fertilizing all around it !

Yes, a secure mind is like a continual feast. (Prov. 15: 15.)

Costly viands, fine flavors, endless quantity and variety, attention on the part of the waiters, agreeable society—all these, and much more, are found at the banquet of a quiet mind ;—and this feast will last as long as I myself desire it—it depends entirely and only upon myself to prolong it into, and throughout, all eternity. A peaceful conscience—a continual feast of joy !

An earthly banquet often begins with hunger and ends with disgust ; not seldom, it is embittered by disagreeable companionship, angry disputes, or noisy quarrels, followed by ill-humor, sorrow, and illness ; but this joyful feast begins with a virtuous life, is continued by perseverance in well-doing, and concludes with the eternal possession of God ; its beginning is love, its progress is love, and its end and crown is love.

And, although the holy fear of God accompanies the testimony of a good conscience, it in no way disturbs its joyful repose ; for this very fear is the guardian of a good conscience. When built upon this fear, hope remains hope, and is restrained from being degraded into presumption,

which would be the destruction of a good conscience. A peaceful conscience—a continual feast of joy !

Yes, a good conscience makes glad and joyful. It is itself the best witness. I am in the right way to the goal—the everlasting possession of God ;—what more certain ground for joy can there be ?

Every other good is exposed to external changes, over which I have hardly ever any control—but my conscience belongs to myself ;—I can so guard it that nothing will injure it, that it will remain pure and directed to God.

To every other joy adheres something of the earth, earthy ; moreover, all mundane delights bear in themselves the germ of decay : a good conscience, alone, is of heavenly origin, its joy is the reflection of the permanent bliss of heaven. There is no pleasure above the joy of the heart. (Ecclus. 30 : 6.)

A good conscience makes us free.

The happiness of the just man does not depend upon the favor of others, even though they be kings or princes.

God, and God alone, is the giver of this joy, the object of this joy, the end and aim of this joy.

He, whose loins are girded with justice, stands in majesty and grandeur ; his royal head and fearless, unbent brow towers far above all the doers of iniquity and the servants of injustice. He has devoted himself to God alone. Thou, O God ! hast broken all other bonds ! (Ps. 115 : 16, 17.)

A good conscience makes us fearless.

It dreads no misfortune, no exterior loss ; for it carries all within itself.

It does not fear men, for their assaults may menace the heart, but cannot enter it. They cannot deprive it of God, or of his peace.

It does not fear death ; it only increases its confidence. Say to the just man (on his death-bed) that it is well (with him), for he shall eat the fruit of his doings. (Is. 3 : 10.)

Then a good conscience shines forth gloriously. Calmly and majestically it sinks out of sight of this world, like the setting sun, in order to rise again in the other world, an everlasting, shining luminary. The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? If armies in camp should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear. (Ps. 26 : 1, 4.)

And this repose, this sweetness, does not desert the just man even in poverty, need, and tribulation.

Honey is not only sweet in itself, but it sweetens whatever is seasoned with it. In like manner, a good conscience sweetens even the bitterest lot.

The just man rejoices more in the midst of sufferings, than does the sinner in his noisy, unholy pleasures, or in his secret lusts, from which he expects consolation.

Though the just should have lost all else, he yet possesses one thing which repairs all losses, because it is above all things: God, and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding. (Phil. 4 : 7.)

Yes, like a spark of fire, which falls into the ocean, every, even the greatest, sorrow passes away, and is extinguished, if it sinks into the sea of a good conscience.

Though deprived of every human consolation, though rejected, despised, and abandoned by all, the good man looking into his heart, and finding his conscience blameless, immediately discovers there a pure fountain of sweetest consolation and satisfaction.

Thus, O my God! my heart has grown young once more! O preserve its recovered innocence! Do not suffer it ever again to become weak, and sick and old! Let not sin poison it, nor the sting of a bad conscience wound it!

May henceforth a pure and holy, and therefore, a happy and contented life, crown my youth. Bless, O Lord, the crown of the year of thy goodness; and thy fields shall be filled with plenty. The beautiful places of the wilderness

shall grow fat : and the hills shall be girded about with joy. (Ps. 64 : 12, 13.)

38.

THE NECESSITY OF PENANCE.

"*Unless you do penance, you shall all likewise perish.*" (Luke 13 : 5.)

There are only two ways to heaven : the way of innocence and the way of penance.

He that has not walked in the first, must take the second. If you shrink from the second, make sure of the first.

The way of innocence is the safest, the shortest, the most acceptable and honorable to God, the most glorious and profitable for ourselves ·—but, alas ! how few there are that walk in it !

Sensuality and self-love refuse to acknowledge that the way of penance is necessary for all those who have declined from the way of innocence.

Self-love shuns confession, which must be followed by penance ; sensuality hates the restraint, the suffering, the acts of mortification, which are the concomitants of penance.

And yet it is written : Unless you do penance, you shall all likewise perish. (Luke 13 : 5.)

And God indeed having overlooked the times of this ignorance, now declareth to men that all should every where do penance. (Acts 17 : 30.)

Without penance as a virtue, there is absolutely no remis-

sion of sin, not even in the tribunal of penance. Penance is, as it were, the coin with which we pay the enormous debt of sin which we owe to God. It is the only one that passes current with him.

Neither under the Mosaic Law, nor under the natural law, could remission of sin be obtained without the virtue of penance.

Do you not perceive that it must be so ?

You have offended God, the best, the Supreme Good—and you do not trouble yourself about it ; you are not sorry for it. On the contrary, you jest, laugh, carouse, and make merry. What idea, then, have you of God's greatness and majesty ?

Not to be sorry for past sins, grieves God almost more than the sin itself.

I attended and hearkened, says God : no man speaketh what is good ; there is none that doeth penance for his sin, saying : What have I done ? (Jer. 8 : 6.)

You have offended God, the just and holy God—and you are not afraid ? There is no change, and you do not fear God ? and yet he stretcheth forth his hand to repay. (Ps. 54 : 20.) Is not this the height of indifference, of insolence, and blindness ?

You have offended God—and in this state, you persevere in the sight of God ? You expect him to endure the vision of your unclean soul, and yet withhold the arm of his justice ? To whom, says God, have you likened me, and made me equal, and compared me, and made me like ? (Is. 46 : 5.)

Moreover, do not imagine that this refers only to the time in which you remain in sin. Even after receiving absolution, penance is necessary.

With the commission of your first mortal sin, you entered the interminable line of those who are bound to do penance. Innocence, once lost, returns no more. Its loveli-

ness is for ever effaced from your brow, and the brand of sin takes its place. You remain a sinner—although a pardoned one—and consequently, a penitent from duty, for the rest of your mortal life, and for all eternity.

Add to this, that the remission of sin is a gratuitous grace from God, altogether interior, wholly supernatural. Once having sinned mortally, you can have no infallible assurance of divine pardon, without a special revelation. No man knows whether he be worthy of love or hatred ; hence, you have continual reason to do penance more and more, since the more abundant your penance, the more certain your pardon.

Yes, penance, alone, gives assurance of forgiven sin, because it is the measure of your good will, the measure of your sincerity and earnestness.

Even without ever having committed a sin, we are obliged to do penance in as far as penance means mortification, struggle, self-abnegation, and the annihilation of the old Adam within us.

We are born penitents, for we are by nature the children of wrath. (Ephes. 2 : 3.)

In our present state, man and penitent are synonymous terms.

Being members of that great family whose ancestors forfeited the friendship of God, and entailed so heavy a curse upon themselves and their posterity, we all bear upon our shoulders the common burden of an inevitable expiation, the heavy weight of an inherited depravity, with whose consequences we must wrestle to the end.

Moreover, as brethren and co-heirs of a suffering God-Man, we share in his penitential character ;—we must share his sufferings, if we wish, one day, to be partakers of his glory.

Just for these reasons, many Saints who had never for-

feited their baptismal innocence, were drawn, as by a supernatural impulse, to do severe penance.

Conscious of the innate corruption of human nature, they were urged to diminish, according to their ability, the consequences of an inherited guilt; they thirsted to annihilate themselves, so to speak; and to make sacrifices which would pay to the majesty and justice of God the tribute of a becoming homage.

If we do not do violence to ourselves, if we do not deny ourselves, fight, and impose sufferings upon ourselves; if we do not wrestle and row against the current of our depraved nature, keeping it in strict subjection to the spirit —will not our passions get the better of us?

To suffer and to avoid, is the great watch-word that is given to us as Christian penitents. Without suffering, and avoiding evil occasions. there is no security, no merit, no crown, no heaven.

To suffer and to avoid is the duty even of the innocent and undefiled; for only among thorns are the lilies safe and secure.

Penance, mortification, dying to ourselves—hard words! Yet, they must be on our lips, and pass into our hearts. From our hearts, they must pass into action; for, unless we do penance we shall all likewise perish.

That which alarms you in penance, my young friend, is its grim visage. You see only severity, bitterness, and pain; you portray it to yourself as pale, corpse-like, and ghastly

Be reasonable. Penance is, indeed, serious. But life, also, is serious; how much more serious, then, the life of him who has sinned!

And behold—from the grim visage, from the stern countenance of self-denial and penance, shine forth true human dignity and heavenly repose!

Penance is well called bitter ; but the bitter nusk conceals a sweet kernel : Peace, consolation, confidence.

That which you dread, will be made easy for you by grace, the unction of the Holy Ghost, the assistance of Mary and the Saints, the prospect of a sure reward, and last, not least—the habit of virtue.

Since the day of Adam's fall, has man ever achieved anything great without labor and sweat ? And should those priceless gifts,—release from the bondage of sin, security against fresh captiviy, recovery of divine favor, its preservation, and the increase of heavenly treasures— cost nothing ?

O, if the damned were given time for doing penance, of what miracles would not the world be witness !

If you have committed only one mortal sin, you must regard yourself as a reprobate ; you have, at least, deserved hell, and you might have fallen into it the very first moment after your sin.

God has preserved you from it ; he has given you time to do penance, and yet you will not repent of your sins ! (Apoc. 2 : 21.)

39.

SINCERE HATRED OF SIN.

"*He that loveth iniquity hateth his own soul.*" (Ps. 10 : 6.)

As not every one that says : Lord, Lord (Matt. 7. 21), shall enter into the kingdom of God, so, also, not all those are in earnest who say : I will sin no more.

You are in earnest if you truly hate sin. To hate sin

means to avoid it in every way, either on account of its enormity and malice, or on account of the insult which it offers to God.

I do not visit the enemy whom I hate. I do not trust him; I am always discovering in him bad intentions towards myself; I guard against him, I oppose him, I seek to injure him, I am embittered against him, I persecute him.

Is it thus you treat sin?

You neither have, nor can have, a greater enemy than sin —of that you must be thoroughly convinced.

Other enemies may injure you in temporal and perishable matters; they can deprive you merely of earthly goods; but sin aims at your only, your immortal soul—at your heaven, and your God!

If you are not yet thoroughly convinced that sin is not only your own, but also God's, greatest enemy,—then, there is no use of speaking of a sincere hatred of sin; but if you are convinced of this fact—then, let sin be accursed to you. Fly from it, war against it wherever, and whenever, and in whomsoever you meet it.

He who does not avoid the occasions of sin, does not really hate sin, because a voluntary meeting of the occasion is almost sin itself,—it is the beginning, the incipient sin, willed in the occasion.

He who plays with the temptation, who does not resist it at all,—or only indolently, does not hate sin. You fear the serpent, and yet, hide it in your bosom?

He who does not hate his carnal nature, does not hate sin, —that enemy within the walls, always present and ready to fan the smallest spark into a devouring conflagration.

He does not hate sin, who neglects to apply a wholesome check to the senses; for it is through these avenues that death enters the heart. Death is come through our window (Jer. 9: 21.)

If you do not hate sin, you hate God. No servant can serve two masters. (Luke 16 : 13.) He that is not with God, is against him. (Luke 11 : 23.)

If you do not hate sin, you hate your own soul, your own happiness. He that loveth iniquity hateth his own soul. (Ps. 10 : 6.)

If you do not hate sin, you hate your youth. Yes, young man, this is the penalty you pay for loving sin. You, in a measure, approach the tree of life which stands covered with the richest blossoms of spring ; you shake it rudely, scattering to the winds its tender buds, or trampling them in the mire.

O cruel one ! you go still farther ; you inoculate the tender branches with the sap of iniquity, which will, in due season, bear poisoned fruits.

Yes, poisoned fruits ! Instead of the habit of virtue —an almost fiendish inclination to evil ; instead of consoling reminiscences of the time of innocence and piety—bitter self-accusation, gnawing remorse ; instead of a quiet comforting outlook into the future, into eternity—an eye dimmed by gloomy anxieties, by distressful expectations of a severe, inexorable judgment.

O sin ! murderer of my youth, robber of my most beautiful days—I curse, I execrate thee ! Now, at least, depart from me, never to return ! All is at an end between us for ever !

Source of all evil—dry up for ever !

Abyss which swallows up all that is noble and beautiful in youth, close thy yawning jaws for ever !

Sin, I hate thee, I abhor thee ! I will pursue thee, banish thee from others, and punish thee in myself.

O Penance—this one word calms me, and re-echoes harmoniously in the void which sin has left in my heart !

40.

THE SPIRIT OF PENANCE.

"*Bring forth, therefore, fruits worthy of penance.*"
(Matt. 3 : 8.)

The sinner makes a great mistake, if he limits his penance to the satisfaction imposed on him in the confessional. Although, by virtue of the Sacrament of Penance, this satisfaction has a special efficacy, yet, through it, alone, the words of Christ : Bring forth fruits worthy of penance,—are not wholly fulfilled.

We are only too apt to forget that we have sinned, and that by rights, we should, long since, have been languishing in hell.

We forget so easily that sin is an offense against the infinite God himself—a rebellion, an ingratitude, an outrage, for which we can never make sufficient reparation to divine justice.

We forget so easily that, after the convalescence, there is so much to be done, which was neglected during our spiritual sickness.

O rebuking zeal of the early Christians ! What mean those different grades of public penitents, —those weepers, hearers, prostrate, and standing penitents ? What is the cause of those protracted, difficult penances,—those fasts, vigils, and mortifications, in reparation for sins which are so habitual in our days that they are nothing thought of ?

And yet, the Church has, in no way, changed her spirit, although she has altered her discipline.

Let us, therefore, bring forth fruits worthy of penance. Let our reparation be proportioned to the multitude and enormity of our sins ; let it be sincere and thorough, as becomes real penitents ; and let it be constant and persevering.

Blessed are you, if death finds you a penitent. This is the safest way to die.

Even heavenly glory will be rendered sweeter by transition from the pains of penance to the celestial bliss. Before the tears have dried on the cheeks of the dying penitent, they are hardened into precious jewels, and placed by the Angels in the diadem of eternal glory.

Penance is, truly, a second Baptism—a bath of tears.

Penance is a continual self-judgment.

Penance is a punishment which, with inexorable severity, one ever inflicts upon himself anew.

Penance is a sentence of death, which the soul daily and hourly executes on herself.

Penance is a surrendering of one's self, a delivery into the hands of well-armed executioners, whom one has engaged for his own torment.

Penance is the unceasing, never-dying cry of the heart : Wash me yet more from my iniquity : and cleanse me from my sin. (Ps. 50 : 4.)

Penance is a bargain in God's favor, whereby we agree that he shall avenge his outraged and violated rights continually upon us.

Penance is a league against the flesh and the senses ; no repose, no rest, any more, on this side of the grave.

Penance is a treaty against sensuality, to withhold from it every delicacy, comfort, and fleshly satisfaction ; to furnish it only with vinegar and gall, with thorns and nails, with cross and spear.

Penance is a declaration of war against "the old man," a feud begun with bitterness—continued and carried on to the end with decision and firmness.

It is a holy wrath, an inventive rage, a well-fed fire, a continually-agitated water, a devouring sword, a living death, a sort of self-created hell—fire upon fire, torture upon torture.

O holy tyranny, or, as St. Peter Alcantara after his death, in a vision exclaimed to St. Theresa : Blessed Penance, which has gained for me such a heaven !

Yes, Penance brings forth everlasting treasures.

Penance is the mother of great and varied virtues.

Penance leads to humility, and confirms us in it.

Penance is the begetter of hope.

Penance is the destroyer of despair.

Penance aids in blotting out the hand-writing of the decree that was against us, . . . fastening it to the cross. (Col. 2 : 14.)

Penance is a continual cleansing of the conscience.

Penance is a shield against the concupiscence of the eyes, the concupiscence of the flesh, and the pride of life.

Penance, glowing and impetuous though it be, cools and damps the fires of natural passion.

Penance is a richly flowing fountain of spiritual consolation.

Penance, in spite of its self-forged chains, enjoys a royal liberty, and looks with compassion upon the hirelings and slaves of the passions.

Penance makes a man of a youth, a hero of a man. It makes the Christian the lord and master of this seductive world, which to rule and trample upon is a genuine pleasure, a real triumph.

Penance is love—at first loving fear, and then, fearing love.

Penance produces love. Moist wood will not ignite, and the love of God cannot be enkindled in a heart that is watered and saturated with sensuality.

Penance practises love, being severe with itself, and indulgent towards others. From a consciousness of its own sinfulness, it refrains from hard judgments of its fellow-man.

Penance is strict, but not morose; it is full of confidence, and, therefore, of a cheerful mind.

Penance makes the little ones great, the simple ones truly wise, and the poor, rich.

Penance is the treasury of incalculable merits.

Penance is the key of heaven. Yes, powerful Penance is the blessed key of heaven. The iron sighed as it bubbled and seethed in the furnace; it sent forth sparks, under the unceasing strokes of the hammer of inexorable self-punishment; but now, fashioned into the most precious key, it opens the narrow gate through which the purified pilgrim of earth enters into bliss eternal.

Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. (Matt. 5 : 5.)

O innocent Aloysius, speak to young men, and tell them of the value of Penance.

Tell the innocent how they must protect the frail vessel which, as yet, they carry whole and entire in pure hands.

Tell the guilty how Penance is the only enduring cement for repairing the precious vessel of innocence, which has been rudely shattered by sin, restoring it to its pristine form, fit again for the eyes of the most pure and holy God.

Unhappy coward and pervert that I am! I could sin, but I cannot do penance. I had the courage to plunge myself into the abyss of hell, but I recoil at crossing a moderate chasm, or at climbing a somewhat steep path, although I know that both lead to heaven!

Woe to thee, Corozain, woe to thee, Bethsaida: for if in

Tyre and Sidon had been wrought the miracles that have been wrought in you, they had long ago done penance in sack-cloth and ashes. But I say unto you : It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment, than for you. (Matt. 11 : 21, 22.)

SECOND BOOK.

CONFIRMATION IN GOOD.

135

41

PERSEVERANCE.

" *Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.*"
(Apoc. 3 : 11.)

O, that I might persevere in good, O Lord, and never again turn aside from the path of justice!

It will avail me nothing if, having known what is good and right, I will and practise it only for a time, and then fall away. On the other hand, if I end well—all is well. He that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved. (Matt. 10 : 22.)

I shall be only the more deserving of punishment, if I look back, after having put my hand to the plough. Then, indeed, I would prove myself utterly unfit for the kingdom of heaven. (Luke 9 : 62.) The servant who knows the will of his master, but does it not, shall be beaten with many stripes (Luke 12 : 47) ; and the better he knows it, the more worthy he shall be of punishment.

The grain is sown, and promises a rich harvest ; but, how is it, if a tempest destroy it ?

The ship is laden with a valuable cargo from which a large profit is expected ; but how,— if it should go down in sight of port ?

The right path is found and entered upon, but how, if I should leave it again, and fall into an eternal, a bottomless abyss ?

In vain is the runner swift, if he give up the race before the goal is reached. Our goal is eternity.

Take away perseverance—and obedience goes without a reward ; a kind service, without a return ; bravery, without praise. Without it, no conversion is salutary,—no virtue deserving of recompense.

Judas began well, but ended badly. From an apostle of the Lord, he became a thief, a liar, a traitor, a Deicide, a suicide

Judas had Jesus for his teacher and spiritual director ; he lived in the society of Mary and the Apostles ; he was the witness of numberless miracles, which must have convinced him of the divinity of Christ ; he had before his eyes the good examples of Jesus, Mary, and the Apostles—he was honored with the confidence of Jesus, was loved and served by him, called his friend—and yet, he made such a sad, such a terrible end !

Wherefore, he that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed, lest he fall. (1. Cor. 10 : 12.)

O perseverance, crown of goodness ! without thee nothing is good, since thou, alone, helpest us to attain the eternal source and fountain of all good !

O perseverance, narrow gate of heaven (Matt. 7 : 14), which cannot be shunned : through which, I must force myself, in spite of all difficulties. (Luke 13 : 24.)

Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, O Lord (Ps. 83 : 5) ; blessed they, whose weary feet have already passed the threshold of the eternal mansions of peace !

Take courage, young man,—have patience, and persevere.

That which makes perseverance seem so difficult to me, a young man, is the thought of the long years during which I must forsake that entrancing evil, and practise that difficult good.

But, are not my days already numbered ?

If I knew that my life would terminate to-morrow, would I find it difficult to persevere until then? Surely not.

Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, saith the Lord. Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. (Apoc. 3 : 11.)

And even suppose, that a long life lies before me :— I will confide in, and rely only on thee, O Lord!

Thy rod and thy staff : they have comforted me (Ps. 22 : 4) ; grant only that I may never turn my back upon that rich place of pasture, in which thou hast set me. (Ps. 22 : 2.) And if kindness be not sufficient to captivate me, let severity be my bridle. Yes, here burn, here cut, but spare me in eternity!

I fully understand it ; if I only will, I can persevere. There are plenty of means, it all depends upon the will.

If I stop up the sources, the poison will cease to ooze forth. Such sources are : Too great an esteem and love for creatures, thoughtlessness, and human respect.

And, then, the passions?—If I would only fight earnestly against them, how certain I would be of perseverance!

Again : if I would firmly resolve to avoid the occasions of sin ; if I would wrestle manfully with temptations ; if I would be on my guard in lesser faults, so that I might not, through them, fall again into greater ones, would I not be then sure of my salvation? And could I not, then, courageously face the future?

Assist me, O my God, with thy powerful grace! Enlighten my ignorance, strengthen my youthful weakness. I am very young and despised (Ps. 118 : 141) ; and the enemies of my salvation-mock at me ; but let thy hand be with me to save me : for I have chosen thy precepts. (Ps. 118 : 173.)

42.

CREATURES.

"*The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and him only shalt thou serve.*" (Matt. 4 : 10.)

Young man, perhaps, you are one of that vast multitude who, mistaking the nature and purpose of creatures, overvalue and abuse them to the prejudice of their immortal souls.

To be strong and persevering in virtue is out of question without a proper conception and use of created things.

These things, whether they be in the form of riches, honors, or pleasures, continually allure and entice us ; they gain entrance into the heart, and there assert their dominion, and demand our worship.

And yet : The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and him only shalt thou serve. (Matt. 4 : 10.)

Were you not created solely for God ?

Why, then, do you give yourself up to anything that is not God ?

Creatures should stand in a very different relation to you.

Called into existence by God, for the increase of his eternal glory, creatures are placed at the disposal of man, the king of the whole visible creation, in order to serve him, yea, to help him to know God, to praise and honor him, to serve him, and thereby, be saved.

Hence, creatures are the means to the end, not the end itself.

What folly it is, then, to seek in them what they neither contain, nor can contain !

How imprudent and silly to desire to rest in them !

What perversity to put them in the place of God !

How pitiable are we, when we cling to perishable creatures!

How degenerate, if we make those things which are so far beneath us, the object of our existence, and thus raise them far above us !

And yet, this is done ; and thence, arise all disorders and evils, including sin and hell, temporal misery and eternal ruin.

O ye sons of men ! how long will you be dull of heart ? Why do you love vanity, and seek after lying ? (Ps. 4 : 3.)

God has made me the lord of creatures ; should I, then, allow them to rule over me ?

God has made me the lord of creatures—subordinate to his supreme dominion and authority,—only requiring of me to use them according to his will. Can I be so ungrateful as to appropriate to myself that which is only a loan ? Can I abuse my stewardship, and turn against my divine Lord the very things whereby he desires me to promote his greater glory ?

Young man, learn the true order of things : man, alone, is a rational and free being ; he, alone, by virtue of his nature, is capable of glorifying God. All other creatures glorify God only through man. To this end, man must make use of creatures, as of so many benefits, and solely according to the most holy and just purposes of his sovereign Lord and Benefactor.

If man arrogate to himself independence ; if he array himself and other creatures in opposition to the designs of God ; if he ascribe to himself anything that he has, or ac-

quires, or accomplishes ; if he, perhaps, even go so far as to make the Giver subordinate to the gift, to turn the gift against the Giver, or to separate the creature from the Creator, causing it to rebel against him,—he destroys the proper relations between the Creator and the creature ; and by a horrible gradation of crime, he becomes an ingrate, a rebel, a robber of the divine goods and glory,—yes, in a certain sense, an annihilator of God. He substitutes the creature for the Creator ; he makes the creature his idol, he burns incense before it ; he bends his knee before the Golden Calf, and from it, he implores and expects happiness, such as only God is able to bestow.

Wicked and perverse generation ! Is this the return thou makest to the Lord, O foolish and senseless people ? (Deut. 32 : 5, 6.) But woe to us ! The creature also itself shall be delivered from the servitude of corruption (Rom. 8 : 21); and then will God take armor, and he will arm the creature for the revenge of his enemies (Wisd. 5 : 18); that is, of those who have misused his gifts.

O my dear young friend, learn early where is true wisdom (Baruch 3 : 14) ; that it consists in using everything in the right way, according to God's intention.

Ask not whether a thing be sweet or bitter, pleasant or unpleasant, easy or hard. Only inquire whether it will help you to gain your last end, whether or not it is God's will, whether he wishes it to be done so, or in a different manner.

Make use of a thing if it promotes your salvation ; refrain from it if it hinders it.

Youth is the season of folly and inexperience. Young people are precipitate in their conclusions—they judge by appearances, mistaking hollowness for solidity, the glitter of gold for the pure metal.

It sees roses. At once, it must pluck them. Let us

crown ourselves with roses, it says, before they be withered. (Wisd. 2 : 8.)

The wine sparkles, the cosmetics exhale a fragrant odor. Youth says : Let us fill ourselves with costly wine and ornaments : and let not the flower of the time (youth) pass by us. (Wisd. 2 : 7.)

Green meadows allure. It says : Let no meadow escape our riot, let us every where leave tokens of joy. (Wisd. 2 : 89.) Come, therefore, and let us enjoy the good things that are present, and let us speedily use the creatures as in youth. (Wisd. 2 : 6.)

These things they thought, and were deceived : for their own malice blinded them. And they knew not the secrets of God, nor hoped for the wages of justice, nor esteemed the honor of (their) holy souls, which they made subordinate to creatures. (Wisd. 2 : 21, 22.)

Do not act thus, my young friend,—look upwards to heaven, to the Uncreated ! What is the creature ? It is the means to the end, and not the end itself. The breath of God, alone,—his spirit,—lives in us : creatures were made for us, and for our use : we were not made for them.

Spare yourself the tardy, humiliating confession : We fools have missed our aim ! We have erred from the truth ; and the light of justice hath not shined unto us ; and the sun of understanding hath not risen upon us. What hath pride profited us ; or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us ? All those things are passed away like a shadow. (Wisd. 5 : 6, 8, 9.)

43.

THE VANITY OF ALL EARTHLY THINGS.

"*Behold, all is vanity, and vexation of spirit.*" (Eccles. 1 : 14.)

It is true, that creatures are the work of God, wherein are reflected his infinite perfections. In them, he has deposited and displays his goodness, beauty, and truth ; by them, he manifests his power and wisdom. But only in a very limited measure he communicates to them that which man, in an infinite measure, may find, know, and love in him who is the Uncreated.

Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity. (Eccles. 1 : 2.) Vain are riches, honors, and pleasures ; vain is everything created—vain in themselves, vain for us, vain in the sight of God, vain for eternity.

How limited is all earthly happiness ! Very few enjoy even a fair share of worldly goods. Do not the vast majority go empty-handed ? Can we, for a moment, suppose that God has placed our happiness in riches, honors, and pleasures ? He distributes such goods most unevenly among the good and the bad. The best of temporal gifts are so circumscribed,—they do not reach beyond the limits of our gross, carnal senses.

How hollow is all earthly happiness ! Does it satiate ? Does it still the cravings of the longing heart ? Like sea-water, it only increases our thirst,—it burns and tortures. The avaricious man says : Yet more ! The sensual man

says : Yet more ! The ambitious man says : Yet more ! Cast into the abyss of desires gold, silver, and precious stones, crowns and thrones, pleasures and joys,—it is bottomless ; and the goods themselves have neither height, nor depth, nor breadth, nor length, nor weight, nor measure, nor value, nor stability — empty foam, vapor, bubbles !

How short-lived is all earthly happiness ! No sooner gained than lost. It lasts but a few years ; and even though it should last a life-time,—is not even the longest life only a dream ? Ten years, fifty, a hundred years ; what tiny drops in the ocean of eternity ! What grains of sand under the footsteps of the King of glory, when he stood and measured the earth (Hab. 3 : 8) with the giant steps of his eternal existence ! Can you arrest the wave which, raging, beats upon the shore ? Even so, earthly happiness, struggle as you may to secure it, escapes you, and rolls by to break upon other shores, to beguile other foolish hearts. If man love it, it contaminates—if he possess it, it oppresses him—if he lose it, it distresses him.

How poisonous is all earthly happiness ! It gnaws at the root of holiness and Christian perfection ; it corrodes them, and lays them bare to the fiery and consuming rays of earthly prosperity. When the tree is struck by the axe of Death, it falls wholly on the side of this world ; and withering, serves only for fuel for the flames of hell.

Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity (Eccles. 1 : 2) besides loving God and serving him alone.

To-day, happiness, riches, honor, pleasure, health, prosperity ;—to-morrow, perhaps, sadness. disgrace, poverty, sickness, death.

To-day, in a palace,—to-morrow, in the tomb.

To-day, upon a soft couch,—to-morrow, in the hard coffin.

To-day, at a bountiful table,—to-morrow, in that place

where food is neither wanted nor found. (Ecclus. 14 : 17.)

To-day, surrounded by flatterers, friends, companions of good cheer and jollification ;—to-morrow, cast forth solitary and alone, to be the fellow to worms and decay.

To-day, laughter and jesting,—to-morrow, the last tear slowly creeping down the pallid cheek.

To-day, titles, dignities, praise, and homage,—to-morrow, only a tomb-stone.

To-day, in blooming beauty, perfumed, adorned, gracious, charming ;—to-morrow, dumb, discolored, disfigured, stinking, shunned, scorned—odious !

To-day, in the freshness and vigor of youth,—to-morrow, a withered and powerless corpse, the distorted image of death—a horrid skeleton !

O vanity of vanities, and all is vanity !

As, in the desert, the moving hills of sand are blown from place to place, making depressions where, before, there were elevations, so earthly possessions come and go, hasten hither and thither. Happy the man who does not set his heart on them, who does not trust in them, but who passes, like a pilgrim through temporal surroundings, careful not to lose what is eternal. The real and only satisfying good is God alone ; from him, proceeds every finite good.

We feel this in our heart of hearts, and hence, we are restless until we find rest in God.

You may be blessed with riches, but if you have not God, the infinite Treasure, what have you ?

You may be honored and respected, but if, among your distinguished titles, that of the child and friend of God is not first and foremost, then, are you surrounded by empty shadows.

You may have many pleasures ; but if their end and object be not God, either directly or indirectly, then, that is

wanting which alone makes enjoyment and pleasure worthy of the soul, and capable of satisfying her cravings.

You cannot expect happiness from exterior things : they are foreign to the soul, insufficient for her needs, and therefore, never perfectly satisfactory.

Money and goods,—you may have plenty of them ; but even as the body cannot live on air,—so the soul cannot live on houses or lands, on metals or jewels, no matter how precious.

Earthly pleasure stops with the senses ; it never reaches the real seat of our measureless longing, our unquenchable thirst for happiness.

O heart created for God ! how little do we comprehend thy nature ! How cruelly do we misunderstand thy desires, how foolishly do we endeavor to satiate thee with vanities which, by contrasting thy present abode with thy true country, render thy exile here more intolerable !

Truly, young man, you were born for greater things.

These earthly toys are not worthy of you. Strip your heart now of every affection for things, from which, sooner or later, inexorable Death must separate you.

The chains which are riveted in youth, are the hardest to break ; therefore, do not rivet them.

Keep your young heart free and untrammeled. Happy will you be if death strikes you while you are yet a free man !

Never forget this truth : God alone satisfies,—he only, and completely.

44.

DEATH.

"*Remember that death is not slow.*" (Ecclus. 14 : 12.)

Yes, death comes, and casts over all earthly splendor a gloomy pall.

It comes,—and the sounds of rejoicing are silenced. Our friends fly from us, the world deserts us ; the fleeting day of earthly life vanishes, to be succeeded by the endless day of eternity. Death comes—or rather, we carry it around with us ; for, dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return. (Gen. 3 : 19.) The sentence is already pronounced, —the gift of immortality is withdrawn from this flesh of ours. Thou shalt die the death. (Gen. 2 : 17.) What shall drive off or subdue the Inevitable ? High living,— a luxurious life ? It is just this that often conjures him up the quicker. Medical science and skill ? These two have their limits, and impotently yield to the all-conquering power of death. It is appointed unto all men once to die. (Heb. 9 : 27.)

Do you not see how other generations spring up, and, like wandering tribes, pursue us ? They press forward, and cry out : Make room for us ; it is our turn now ; descend into the grave, and no longer crowd the path of pilgrimage, on which we have to travel.

Death comes,—but, only ONCE.

Decisive step, which can be taken only—once ! One

threshold, which I must cross, and beyond it, either heaven or hell—there is no way whereby to return. It is appointed unto all men once to die.

Man lives only once ; and therefore, can die only once. A good death—a bad death ?—All depends upon that final moment. There will be no second trial.

Death comes—but when ?—where ?—how ?

O uncertainty,—more torturing even than the greatest certainty ! Shall I, a boy, grow into a youth ? Shall I, a youth, reach manhood ? Will death overtake me to-day, or to-morrow ?

Will it surprise me suddenly ? Will it attack me violently ? Will it smother me in blood ? Will it drown me in the waves ? Will it softly and gradually extinguish the light of life ?

Will it approach, disguised like a robber, or will it make itself known, and give me time to look it in the face ?

O labyrinth of possibilities —of probabilities—of hopes, and of fears !

Old people must die, young people may die. Yes, even the infant dies. Even boys and children die. They also are dust and slime ; their fair and blooming habitations are shaken by the iron hand of death, which does not find it difficult to demolish the best and brightest. To-day, for me ; to-morrow, for you.

Remember, that death is not slow. (Ecclus. 14 : 12.) Not slow—do you hear ? Even though he should wait for ten or twenty years,—is that long ? He comes, at all events ; and seems to come so soon that your whole life is only as a dream.

Is it always better to die in old age ?

Ah, a long life means greater responsibilities. A long life is not always a better life. The older the sinner, the deeper he grovels in the mire ; the faster he is bound by

the bonds of sinful attachment, the greater the force required to break his fetters.

No doubt—death comes,—and how cold is his hand ! How heavily it falls upon eyes whose lids must be for ever more closed. How unsparingly it furrows even the most blooming cheeks !

He comes,—and how stern is his aspect ! Take order with thy house, he exclaims. Arrange all your external affairs—but above all, settle all the internal affairs of your house ;—for you shall die, and not live ! (Is. 38 : 1.)

He comes,—and alas ! how violent is his action !

He despoils man entirely of gold, silver, jewels, treasures, adornments. Nothing is left but a shroud and a coffin. And though your very heart be fused with your gold into one and the same idol, even then, the separation must take place ; the robbery must be consummated, in spite of all opposition.

He separates. Children will be torn from their parents, parents from their children, friends from friends. No lamentations, or outcries, or wringing of hands, or pitiful supplications, will be of any avail.

He delivers the body to corruption. That which is now called a corpse,—pale, cold, disfigured, and motionless,—in a few weeks, will be a crumbling heap of bones. A remnant of humanity, a skull,—and, after a few years, a handful of dust and ashes,—this is the whole glory of the flesh —of that flesh, which is so often worshipped as an idol. Behold now, what you adore !

Death delivers the soul to God, leading her before his judgment-seat ; and there—oh woe to her, if she be burdened with guilt !

This robbery, this separation, this delivery—are the work of a moment. As a dream that fleeth away, he shall not be found ; he shall pass as a vision in the night . . .

and they that had seen him, shall say : Where is he ? (Job 20 : 7, 8.)

This is what awaits you ; this is the fate from which you cannot escape. And perhaps, all this may happen to you while you are still a youth. Is it impossible ?

45.

JUDGMENT.

"*All things that are done, God will bring into judgment.*" (Eccles. 12 : 14.)

Death delivers us into the hands of the Eternal Judge, and, standing before his awful tribunal, we shall clearly see what temporal things have been, and what they should have been, to us.

At the shore of Eternity,—together with all earthly things,—we had to leave the frail bark which bore us over the ocean of life : our corrupt body.

There fell from our eyes, as it were, scales. (Acts 9 : 18.) Far behind us, lay the world ; its siren song no longer reached our ears ; the glitter of its gold no longer dazzled our eyes ; its delights no longer charmed our senses ; those senses were annihilated—There remain to us at the moment of death, only God and Eternity.

Every delusion has ceased. A bright light illumines the heart. It now sees what it should have seen long ago. In the presence of Truth—God—it must confess all the er-

rors of the past ; all its short-comings, whether voluntary or involuntary, with all their consequences—obduracy. sloth, folly, and indifference !

It is not the world with its loose principles that now judges you ; your sentence will not be according to its code of laws.

The All-Holy himself and his holy Gospel,—behold the standard by which you will now be judged !

O most wise Judge ! O most incorruptible Judge ! O most powerful Judge ! out of whose hands no one can escape, —whose sentence no one can evade or reverse !— Whither shall I go from the spirit ? or whither shall I flee from thy face ? (Ps. 138 : 7.)

Weight and balance are judgments of the Lord : and his work all the weights of the bags (Prov. 16 : 11) ; And all things that are done, God will bring into judgment for every error, whether it be good or evil. (Eccles. 12 : 14.)

My young friend, if at this moment, God should call you before his judgment-seat, what would be the consequence ? Would the issue be favorable to you ?

What faults would you have to deplore most bitterly ?

What self-deception would cause you the heaviest responsibility ?

What use have you made of the creatures around you ? of riches and goods, food and drink, rest and recreation ? of health and bodily strength ? of your young body and youthful members ? of your senses ? of your talents, your memory, imagination, intellect, and free will ?

Would you dare to make your youth an excuse for your sins ?

It is true, you are young,—but, just on that account, you are nearer to the well-spring of Truth, to the fountain of Life—to the starting-point of the journey.

You are young—but reason and faith speak also to you,

young man,—self-observation and experience can, should, and do teach you the true value of creatures, that they were only made to lead you to the Creator.

Be wise in time. If once the balance of evil descends, and you are found wanting,—ah ! then, it will be too late ! Should you, then, shed torrents of tears, it will be in vain ; they cannot soften the heart of the infinitely Just, who now owes justice to himself. Your tears will fall without effect upon the burning heat of the eternal flames which, already, burst forth from the infernal abyss to devour you !

46.

THE WORLD.

" *Religion clean and undefiled before God the Father is this . . . to keep one's self unspotted from this world.*" (James 1 : 27.)

The world is the congregation of sinners, and of all that entices to sin.

It is the vast majority who cling to this material sphere with its so-called goods,—who place all their happiness in things sensible and visible, and, having no appreciation of, or delight in, supernatural things, neglect, and even despise them.

Thus, the world hates poverty, suffering, humiliation ; it considers them as dreadful evils to be avoided at every cost.

On the other hand, it strives for riches, prosperity, re-

spect, honor, fame ; these constitute its heaven, to attain which no means is disdained.

The world knows no joy, but that which is obtained through the senses and corrupt nature.

The world knows no honors but those of title, office, dignity, or the respect of men.

The world knows no goods but those which shine and glitter, which can be purchased for dollars and cents.

The world means the things of time as opposed to the things of eternity.

The world lives only in the present, and excludes all thought of the future.

The world, therefore, is the adversary of Christ.

It is the enduring worship of self, of nature, of matter,—of time, with its priests, worshippers, altars, victims, and sacrifices.

No wonder, that it is said of this world : it is seated in wickedness. (1. John 5 : 19.)

No wonder, that it is cursed, and that we are innumerable times warned against it.

I pray not for the world, says Jesus, but for them whom thou hast given me ; because they are thine. (John 17 : 9.) And : Have confidence, I have overcome the world. (John 16 : 33.)

Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him. (1. John 2 : 15.)

Know you not, that the friendship of this world is the enemy of God ? Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of this world, becometh an enemy of God. (James 4 : 4.)

O, be not conformed to this world ! (Rom. 12 : 2.) The world passeth away, and the concupiscence thereof. But he that doeth the will of God, abideth for ever. (John 2 : 17.)

Religion pure and unspotted with God and the Father

is this : To visit the fatherless and widows in their tribulation, and to keep one's self undefiled from this world. (James 1 : 27.)

Whatever is born of God, overcometh the world : and this is the victory which overcometh the world, our faith. (1. John 5 : 4.)

In the early ages of Christianity, when the lines of separation were more sharply drawn, it was not difficult to distinguish the children of this world from the children of God. But now, in the universal medley and state of tepidity, a new world is formed even among Christians themselves, and it is extremely difficult to detect evil, and bravely avoid it.

The service of God and of Mammon are confusingly blended. The seed of the Gospel is sown more circumspectly ; the poisonous cockle of unbelief is more sedulously concealed by fallacious arguments and sophistical reasoning.

One is in constant danger of becoming insidiously, by degrees—as it were, almost unconsciously—a deserter from the True Fold. To attempt to unite incompatible principles, or to reconcile those which are irreconcilable, is to become a traitor to the Gospel.

There is, then, only one means of safety : a decided, absolute rupture with the world. Yes, the heart, the mind, the will, must break off for ever with it. There must be open enmity—a declaration of war, a total separation,—that we may not be condemned with this world. (1. Cor. 11 : 32.)

The world must be crucified to us. (Gal. 6 : 14.) We must regard the world as a miserable criminal, deserving of the ignominious death of the cross. The very sight of it must be hateful to us ; we must abhor all connection with it, renounce all share in its works. We must not, we will

not, have anything more to do with it. Begone, Satan! (Matt. 4 : 10), thou tempter, thou murderer from the beginning! (John 8 : 44.)

Yes, let the world be crucified to me; it has crucified my Lord and Saviour, because he condemned its principles, its mode of action, and convinced it of untruth and injustice; because he restrained its influence. It still crucifies him, mocks and persecutes him, and all who adhere to him.

Do you wish to know the world? Take the Gospel of Jesus in one hand, and that of the world in the other; compare principle with principle, counsel with counsel, fact with fact.

Who is right?

If he is right, who is the Way, and the Truth, and the Life (John 14 ; 6) ; whose only desire is the glory of God and the salvation of man ; who came to re-establish all things, (Ephes 1 : 10)—why do you carry water upon both shoulders? Why do you waver and vacillate? If the Lord be God, follow him ; but if Baal, then follow him. (3. Kings 18 : 21.) Half-heartedness is nothing less than desertion and treachery.

My dear young friend, learn to know this wicked world ; for its great and manifold dangers threaten your native simplicity. Learn to know it ; for, once falling into its clutches, if you are so fortunate as to ever again escape therefrom, it can only be with cruel wounds ; the teeth thereof are the teeth of a lion, killing the soul of men. (Ecclus. 21 : 3.)

Yes, it is a wicked world—wicked in its dealings, wicked in its selfishness, wicked in its designs upon you.

It is foolish—notwithstanding all the reason and intelligence upon which it unceasingly prides itself. Is it not the height of folly to affirm, teach, and do the very op-

posite of that which was affirmed, taught, and done by the uncreated Wisdom, the only-begotten Son of God?

The world is wicked. It is a cheat and an impostor. It has nothing—yet it promises everything. What, after all, does it offer us? Nothing intrinsically good. Riches, honors, and pleasures,— what are they, but dangerous goods that fail to satisfy. It gives a scorpion instead of an egg, a serpent instead of a fish, a stone instead of bread. (Luke 11 : 11, 12.)

It is a traitor. It robs others in order to enrich you ; and, again, according to its caprice, robs you, in your turn, to enrich others. And then—at the hour of death? Then, it turns its back upon you. giving you over to your sufferings, to your death-agony, leaving you in the hands of eternal justice. Look thou to it! (Matt 27 : 4), it maliciously cries out, while it flies from you, surrendering you to eternal torments ; and then it goes its riotous way in quest of fresh victims.

Can I say, after this, that the world is not a cruel tyrant? Arbitrary, domineering, it demands unquestioning faith, absolute surrender, blind obedience. Does it not threaten? Does it not punish? Does it not employ poison, and the dagger?

It is a murderer. Here below, it wounds the breast of its follower with the viper stings of remorse, while in the life to come—ask the damned, who it was that first enticed them to the brink of the precipice, and then, in cold blood, pushed them over into the bottomless abyss!

From the heavens above, and from hell below, resounds a curse against the world.

O fly from it, guard yourself against its allurements! Rest content to be condemned, mocked, persecuted by it rather than fall into its embraces.

And, if it will not leave you in peace, then, drive it away

forcibly—persecute it. Do you know what is intolerable to it? The Cross.

47.

THE HOUR OF DEATH.

"*O death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee to a man that hath peace in his possessions.*" (Ecclus. 41 : 1.)

To me, also, will come that last hour, the end of my life. Stretched upon a bed of pain, surrounded by weeping relatives and lamenting friends, I will tremblingly await its approach.

The dread Visitor is already announced ; the Body of the Lord has been administered as my Viaticum on the fearful journey to eternity ; the holy oil has anointed me for the last, decisive combat.

Farewell, all you who, here below, were so near and dear to me! The last hour approaches! All the members of the body grow cold. The breath comes with difficulty. The strength fails ; and yet, the body is reluctant to part company with the soul, without whom it will sink into a lifeless mass of corruption. A fierce struggle ensues. The death-sweat moistens the brow,—the last tear flows from the hollow eye.

At this moment, a struggle of a different kind is taking place, of which the soul only is conscious. She wages a last, decisive combat with that great Enemy who has so often before, during life, assaulted her, and contended for her possession.

Frightful pictures pass in review before her astonished eyes. Like a smothering burden, the remembrance of a guilty life weighs upon the panting heart.

So many years! So much iniquity! So little good! Innocence early lost—misspent youth—neglected duties —scandal given!

And the artful tempter,—he, who formerly made light of grievous transgressions,—now brings them in a mass before the soul, filling her with thoughts of distrust and despair!

It is true, that the priest of God whispers consoling words, which fall like balm upon the tortured heart. The look which the fast-closing eye directs to the crucifix, discovers, indeed, the features of a merciful Saviour; but nevertheless—this is the hour of the power of darkness (Luke 22 : 53); and for this last hour the prince of darkness has long waited.

Depart, then, O Christian soul, out of this miserable world, in the name of God the Father Almighty, who created thee; in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, who suffered for thee; in the name of the Holy Ghost, who sanctified thee; in the name of the Angels, Archangels, Thrones, Dominations, Cherubim, and Seraphim; in the name of the Patriarchs and Prophets, in the name of the holy Apostles and Evangelists, of the holy Martyrs and Confessors, of the holy Monks and Hermits, of the holy Virgins, and of all the Saints of God! Let thy place be, this day, in peace, and thy abode in holy Sion!

The death-rattle grows more violent,—the tongue refuses its service—the mind is confused—the eye glazed. The outside world is receding—vanishing. One moment more, —and it will lie far behind me!

Farewell, possessions, money, goods, valuables, on which my heart was set;—you cannot be my attendants now!

O death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee to a man that hath peace in his possessions ; to a man that is at rest, and whose ways are prosperous in all things, and that is yet able to eat meat. (Ecclus. 41 : 1, 2.)

I am dying.—I am dead.

There, lies my body—cold, stiff, ugly ; they dress it sparingly, and hastily carry it out of the house. They cast it into the grave, where it at once becomes the food of worms.

My name is already forgotten upon earth ; the tears of the mourners are soon dried ; my estate is divided among my heirs. O vanity of vanities, and all is vanity ! (Eccles. 1 : 2.)

In the gloomy grave, I have prepared a narrow bed : I have said to rottenness : Thou art my father ; to worms, you are my mother, and my sister. (Job 17 : 14.)

I promised myself a long life, and behold, I have already entered the portals of eternity. Whilst I was yet but beginning, he cut me off. (Is. 38 : 12.)

O death, thy sentence is welcome ! Thou teachest us to judge rationally. Thou makest known to us the value of all earthly things, which cannot go with us beyond the grave.

Thou dost forcibly show us the better and nobler part of us,— the soul, —which can never die, —which is not buried in the earth, and which shall never see corruption.

Thou curest us of all inordinate attachments to creatures and earthly things. Thou strippest us of riches, honors, prosperity, and enjoyment.

Since you must part with them in the end, why rivet chains, whose breaking will cost you so much pain and suffering ?

Thou admonishest us, O death, to be watchful ; for thou wilt come as a thief in the night, to snatch away thy

victim, by the divine decree.— without regard to age, sex, condition, or rank.

O death, thy sentence is welcome ! Thou showest to the sufferer, to the man of sacrifices and renunciation, the end of his trials, and the beginning of his reward. O, welcome death ! O port of rest ! Triumphal gate, threshold of happiness, redeemer, saviour !

Thou puttest an end to every temptation, and to the danger of again offending God.

Thou leadest us from this valley of tears, to Jesus and his Saints. Thou refreshest the weary wanderer of earth, and crownest his efforts ; thou dost people heaven with Saints, and leadest princes to their appointed thrones !

O youth, you have no cause to fear death. Only lead a pure life, and preserve your innocence,—and your death will be but a passage to a better life. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his Saints. (Ps. 115 : 15.)

48.

CHRIST—THE SAINTS—THE WORLD.

"*Now is the judgment of the world : now shall the prince of this world be cast out.*" (John 12 : 31.)

The testimony of him who knows the truth, and is willing to speak the truth, not only deserves credit, but is also indisputable.

Such testimony becomes more and more credible in proportion to the witness's intelligence, sincerity, and incorruptibility

What, then, are we to think of the testimony of Christ and of his Saints ?

If I do judge, says Jesus, my judgment is true. (John 8 : 16.)

It must be—it is, indeed, O my Saviour ! for thou art Christ, the Son of the living God. (Matt. 16 : 16.)

Thou art co-existent with the Father, from eternity ; thou sharest with him his power and majesty, as well as his wisdom and truth !

Whatever the Father knows, that, also, thou knowest. From this divine knowledge, thou hast drawn the treasure of doctrine, which thou hast communicated to the world ; and according to this divine science, thou hast left thy life as a model to all men.

If I do judge, my judgment is true, because I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me. (John 8 : 16.) I and the Father are one. (John 10 : 30.)

Yes, O Lord ! my God ! thy testimonies are become exceedingly credible. (Ps. 92 : 5.) That which thou approvest is good ; that which thou condemnest, is worthy of condemnation.

The Saints, obviously, are those who come nearest to Christ, by the adoption of his principles, and the imitation of his example.

Instructed by his Gospel, educated in his school, nourished by his Spirit, guided and aided by his grace,—they are indelibly stamped with the image of the Holy of Holies. As he judged, they judged ; as he approved or condemned, they approved or condemned.

They lived, not they, but Christ lived in them. (Gal. 2 : 20.)

No wonder, that the world was to them, what it was to Christ, that they despised it, and trampled it underfoot. Once recognizing the only way of true greatness, they

mounted by it to the only true heroism of a total detachment from all things.

What was the world to Christ?

Now, this is the judgment of the world, says he; now, shall the prince of this world be cast out (John 12 : 31); now, will his plots be discovered; now, will he be unmasked; now, will our warfare begin against him.

Can that be good, against which Christ takes the field and declares war?

The principles of Christ are diametrically opposed to those of the world; and by enforcing them, he condemns the world, and brands it as an abyss of error and corruption.

The world says: Blessed are the rich; for they need not deny themselves anything, and may already enjoy their heaven, here below.

Jesus says: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Matt. 5 : 3.)

The world says: Blessed are they who can take revenge; for they vindicate their honor, and gratify their resentful feelings.

Jesus says: Blessed are the meek: for they shall possess the land. (Matt. 5 : 4.)

The world says: Blessed are they who know nothing of sorrow and suffering, of labor and disappointment; for this is man's comfort upon earth—to be merry and see good days.

Jesus says: Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. (Matt. 5 : 5.)

The world says: Blessed are they who live in luxury and abundance,—who eat rich viands and drink costly wines.

Jesus says: Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill. (Matt. 5 : 6.)

The world says: Blessed are they who know how to help

themselves ; charity begins at home : let the poor and the miserable take care of themselves.

Jesus says : Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. (Matt. 5 : 7.)

The world says : Blessed are they who follow their carnal lusts in all things. Let us have plenty of sensual enjoyments and gratifications—though the soul should perish.

Jesus says : Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God. (Matt. 5 : 8.)

The world says : Blessed are they who insist upon their rights even to the extreme of violence ; to relinquish them is a disgrace and a loss, and gives our neighbor the advantage over us.

Jesus says : Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God. (Matt. 5 : 9.)

The world says : Blessed are you when men bear you up in their hands, caress, flatter, and favor you ; for thus, you walk in pleasant paths, and pass quiet days. Blessed are you when men esteem you highly, when they praise you, and load you with honors. Worthy of benediction that you are, you have reached the summit of earthly happiness. Rejoice, and be glad, and enjoy yourselves to your heart's content.

Jesus says : Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake : for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake : rejoice, and be exceeding glad, because your reward is very great in heaven. (Matt. 5 : 10-12.)

Not only in principles, but in action, has Jesus shown his antagonism to the world ; all his footsteps point the other way.

Go to Bethlehem and contemplate the Crib ;—journey

into Egypt—tarry at Nazareth—wander through Judea—betake yourself to Gethsemane—ascend Mount Calvary :—do you not every where meet a lowly Jesus, an abject Jesus, a suffering Jesus? Poor, humiliated, suffering, of his own free choice '

What value did Jesus place upon comforts, riches, honors, and prosperity — upon goods, which the world exalts above the stars ; for which it hoarsely clamors, untiringly labors ; which it breathlessly pursues, and fights for, to the death ? To acquire which, no road is too long, no path too steep, no exertion too great, no risk too daring, no means too wicked

The whole life of Christ, from the Crib to the Cross, convinces the world of sin, and of justice, and of judgment (John 16 : 8) ; and this accusation and condemnation will last as long as the doctrine of Jesus endures, and his holy example finds imitators among men.

And—O, the power of that divine example !—a great cloud of witnesses (Hebr. 12 : 1) overshadows the earth ; and from it, stream forth Apostles and Martyrs, Confessors and Virgins, far above the delusions and deceits of a benighted world. From this cloud, thunders forth the judgment already so solemnly and emphatically pronounced by Christ, the echo of which shall resound through the centuries—until the end of time !

On the last great Day, —the day of truth and testimony,—the judgment pronounced by Christ, long ago, shall be confirmed and ratified by the assembled heavens, by the Angels and the Elect. All falsehood will be at an end—truth, alone, remain triumphant.

She is fallen, she is fallen, that great Babylon, which made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. (Apoc. 14 : 8.)

Let not, then, the delusive glitter of the world tempt

you, my dear young friend. Let faith enlighten your eyes, and the beams of eternity penetrate the darkness of this nether world.

Let your judgment be always in accord with that of Christ. Through him, who is the light of the world (John 8 : 12), may you be enlightened ! Believe him, upon his word ; he knows the truth ; he will not, and cannot, keep it from you.

The world is deluded ; it pursues deceit, and seeks to spread abroad the snares of error, in order to hide its own hollowness. It has especial designs upon the young ; its most earnest desire is to surprise them, entice them, and drag them down to ruin. Inexperience aids it ; susceptibility, curiosity, the ardent mind, the thirsting heart—all these are so many avenues by which its spirit finds entrance, and holds possession.

Beware, lest, perhaps, your heart be deceived, and you depart from the Lord. (Deut. 11 : 16.)

He that bewareth of the snares, shall be secure. (Prov. 11-15.)

Be of the number of those that use this world as if they used it not. (1. Cor. 7 : 31.)

49.

SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS.

"*Son of man, dig in the wall : . . . go in, and see the wicked abominations.*" (Ezech. 8 : 8, 9.)

The spiritual eye, no less than the corporal one, may be purposely closed, or blinded.

We may fail to see what would be for our salvation, or

for the amendment of life ; we may be blind to ourselves remain to ourselves, a dark and puzzling enigma.

This spiritual blindness is far more serious in its consequences than corporal blindness.

I do not know myself—therefore, I am apt to overestimate myself.

I do not know myself,—consequently, I do not know from what quarter danger threatens me—what is to be removed—what is to be amended.

This blindness is carefully fostered by Satan. He labors zealously to make us strangers in the dwellings of our own hearts. Now, he makes use of external distractions, of business, of pleasures, in order to divert our attention from ourselves ; again, he arouses self-love, to which nothing is more disagreeable than to discover the meanness of our inner nature ; or, he makes use of false friends, who flatter us, who envelop us in clouds of incense, so that we can no longer distinguish our true selves.

From this, it is evident, how dangerous spiritual blindness is. It promotes the ruin of the soul ; hence it is caused and nourished by Satan.

In effect, if I do not know myself, I may suddenly meet the fate of a careless dweller in a tottering house, who finds his grave under its ruins, because he did not know that the foundations were undermined.

It may happen to me as to the incautious sailor, who knows not of a leak in his boat, till he sees it founder at sea.

At least, it may be with me as with the conceited artist, who despises every instruction, scoffs at just criticism, and refuses to study a perfect model, lest he be made aware of his deficiencies and bungling work.

Truly, if you do not know what, and how much, are wanting to you, all effort and emulation are impossible.

It may be more comfortable to remain in ignorance—but then, the responsibility ?

Why has God given us such an abundance of natural and supernatural light, with the consoling promise always to give more for the asking—if not, in order that we know what is wanting to us ? (Ps. 38 : 5.)

Why, then, do you examine your conscience so hurriedly, so superficially, when you prepare for confession ?

Why do you seldom, or never, make serious account of a misspent day ?

Why, in the whole course of the year, do you scarcely spend one quarter of an hour in spiritual retreat, searching into your passions, their growth or their decrease, their combination, and ruinous effect upon the soul ?

How many possess the most intimate knowledge of others,—know, at least, enough to speak and judge of their character, manners, and actions ; yet, to themselves, are as a veiled picture, of which they have scarcely any idea.

Is not this shameful ? You hypocrites, you know how to discern the face of the heavens, and of the earth (Luke 12 : 56) ; yet, you know not how matters stand with your own souls !

And again : What is it that makes us hard and unfeeling towards our fellow-men ? This overweening estimation of ourselves,—this self-love. From this, originate rash judgments, bitterness, false zeal, hatred. Why seest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye ; and seest not the beam that is in thy own eye ? (Matt. 7 : 3.)

Even the pagan philosophers made self-knowledge the highest point of wisdom, recommended it highly, and gave lessons as to the modes of practising it.

And shall we, to whom revelation and grace are a guide and a light, be surpassed by the heathen in that most useful science of self-examination and self-knowledge ?

My dear young friend, you may be a hard student. You have devoted years to acquiring knowledge, and, perhaps, expect to devote thereto the greater part of your future life. But, having all knowledge, save that of yourself, you are the most ignorant of men.

What does it profit you to possess all imaginable wisdom, if you are not wise to yourself?

There are only two real sciences for a Christian: The knowledge of God, and the knowledge of one's self.

Lord, that I might know Thee—that I might know myself! (St. Augustine.)

The knowledge of God produces fear, love, and fervor.

The knowledge of myself causes a salutary shame, humility, and zeal.

Self-knowledge is essentially necessary to the young.

In youth, the passions develop themselves; and it is of the utmost importance to resist them in their very beginning. To this end, it is necessary for me to know my ruling passions, and to what an extent they influence my character; and this knowledge can only be obtained by self-examination.

Satan, on his side, is never more active than when he perceives a new passion springing up in our hearts; he incites it to rebel, he nourishes it, supplies it with arms and ammunition. If we are not constantly on our guard, this important time will be overlooked, and the evil will take firm hold of our hearts, before we suspect its approach.

Son of man, dig in the wall: . . . go in, and see the wicked abominations which they commit here. (Ezech. 8: 8, 9.)

Yes, penetrate through the thick barrier of that voluntary blindness which veils you from yourself. Be no longer a mystery to yourself.

If you honestly purpose to decline from evil and to do

good, you must know yourself. Aimless efforts are useless ones ; and, only through a knowledge of yourself, can you know where to aim.

A blind young man—what a heart-rending, pitiable sight ! Never to behold the glorious sunlight ; never to rejoice in the beauties of nature ; never to revel in the sight of the azure vault of heaven, or in the verdure of the fields ;—and all this, at an age when life wells forth so richly, bubbles forth, as it were, from every pore !

A blind youth, who sees not God, sees not himself ! Debarred of access to the light of salutary knowledge !

O Lord, my God, enlighten my eye, that I may never sleep in death. (Ps. 12 : 3, 4.) O Lord, my God, enlighten my darkness ! (Ps. 17 : 29.) Tear away the deceitful veil of self-love, the bandage of cowardice, which will not suffer the soul to see, lest she should be compelled to act.

Why wait, until the dazzling light of a dawning eternity shall dispel my voluntary darkness, and affright me with its cruel disclosures ?

50.

WEAKNESS OF THE WILL.

"O children, how long will you love childishness ?"
(Prov. 1 : 22.)

The will is the most precious gift with which our bountiful Creator has endowed the soul of man. It is the sublime prerogative, whereby — according to our own good pleasure —we decide for, or against, a certain course.

The will is enlightened by the understanding. This torch of knowledge shows us the good which is to be embraced, making it shine forth in all its heaven-born beauty ; but it also discloses the evil in its native and infernal deformity.

The will, in common with all the other faculties of the soul, is capable of development and perfection, as well as of neglect and perversion.

There are those who seem almost devoid of will, except for the natural and the sensual. That which flatters corrupt nature, that which pleases, delights, is agreeable,—that they will.

But this is not so much will, as natural instinct ; for the real will always acts in union with knowledge, and determines itself thereby,

Again : there are men of exceedingly weak will. These are capable only of the immediately-tangible, of the commonest, most ordinary, and least difficult, attainments.

These may be called children, rather than men, since they are incapable of the morally-difficult, of real manly efforts and perseverance.

They waver to and fro ; they oscillate between good and bad, only sipping the good. The surface is their favorite element ; nothing that amounts to anything is accomplished, nothing of any importance carried out.

Of such, it is truly said : O children, how long will you love childishness ? (Prov. 1 : 22.) Let us, henceforth, be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine. (Ephes. 4 : 14.)

And there are legions of such children even among those who, in the material order, accomplish really great things.

If there be question of research, discovery, invention, mechanical skill, and outward activity,—of the prosecution of

ambitious and avaricious plans—they resemble victorious generals, to whom no fortress is impregnable, no hostile weapon too destructive, no opposition too obstinate.

But—alas ! for these children in the spiritual warfare ! O, the cowards ! for long years, they have not gained a single victory over their own hearts !

The least difficulty alarms them ; the least effort exhausts. A shallow pit, a hay mound, is sufficient to stop these heroes. The most contemptible enemy puts these children to an ignominious flight. O pitiable state ! How ridiculous appears this interior littleness, when associated with an (apparently) exterior greatness.

There, goes a young man who carries his head very high ! He thinks he is witty, cultured, respectable, handsome, honorable. Full of himself, vain, self-willed, haughty, domineering, arbitrary, untractable, inaccessible, he feeds himself at present with an imaginary greatness, and dreams of still greater things in the future ; but oh !—look into his heart ! What do you find there ? Defeat upon defeat, ignominy upon ignominy, slavery, misery, meanness, loss—perhaps, even of manhood !

He broods over magnificent plans. The existing order of things does not suit him,—he censures everything ; every where he sees faults, defects, much-needed reforms. Thus and so, should it be ; thus and so, it must become. But he does not raise a hand to set his own interior in order. Therein, he checks no abuse ; therein, rebellion flourishes luxuriantly ; the throne is tottering, and savage hordes usurp the government.

Young man, that, only, is a proper will which undertakes and accomplishes morally great, morally difficult things.

So noble a faculty is given man only for the attainment of his ultimate end.

If the understanding says : There, is a fault ; here, is the

sore spot of the heart,—the will should reply : It must be remedied in such and such a manner. And whilst saying it, the will must put its strength to the work.

Behold, how it copes with impediments ! Difficulties are not wanting.

Perhaps, it is driven back a hundred times, only to return a hundred times to the attack. And with the battle-cry : " God wills it, and I will it !"—it plants the victorious banner upon the conquered heights.

Moreover, instead of resting idly on its laurels, it arms itself with new impetuosity, hastening from fort to fort, from camp to camp ; and, having taken all the strongholds of the rebellious passions, (of course, at the price of sweat and blood,) it proceeds, by vigilance and continual struggle, to keep what it has acquired, to put it in security—to rule, order, and govern, the conquered territory.

O all-powerful will of youth ! If the freshness, the activity, the whole-heartedness of his age, but animate the young man's noble will, nothing is able to resist him, not even the most inveterate vice, nor the most difficult practice of virtue.

" I will !" he says,—and, as the walls of Jericho were prostrated by the shrill sound of Josua's trumpets, so, all obstacles give way before this hero full of faith and activity.

A thing is no sooner willed, than the hand grasps the coveted boon ; he holds it fast ; he guards, and makes good use of it.

Without an active, persevering will, the young man is like a slender reed which a sudden wind bends, tosses, and breaks, whilst the tops of the sturdy young oak reach heavenward.

Young man, in vain, you lay the blame on your natural disposition ; in vain, you accuse the vehemence of your passions ; you can will, and where there is a will, there is a way.

To the omnipotence of your will, everything yields ; through it, you are either an annihilator or creator.

Say then once and resolutely : I will.

And since true strength of will consists of two things, an idea and a sentiment,—a clear, comprehensive, active, powerful thought, and a strong, overruling sentiment,—take from the rich treasury of your holy faith, from the inexhaustible storehouse of your heaven-born religion, such a powerful thought, such an inspiring sentiment.

51.

THOUGHTLESSNESS.

"*With desolation is all the land made desolate : because there is none that considereth in the heart.*" (Jer. 12 : 11.)

My son, how comes it, that, as yet, there is so little light in you, and that your will is capable of so little ?

Is it not owing to your youthful levity, which seeks to avoid every serious thought, and every thoroughgoing resolution ?

Why is my revealed Word a sealed book to you ? Why do the great truths of salvation so seldom penetrate your heart, or find a resting-place therein ?

Again and again, you cast yourself into the whirlpool of worldly distractions ; again and again, you permit yourself to become the sport of the stream of everyday life. Never a resting-place, never a halt ; no standstill, no reflection.

Thus, it is truly impossible that you should hear me,

your Creator, when thousands of creatures buzz around you ; for I am not in the wind, nor in the earthquake. (3. Kings 19 : 11.) Equally impossible it is, that you should see yourself as you are, when your interior, as well as your exterior eye is bewildered by objects of every sort.

And if, once in a while, a wholesome thought, which might be fruitful in good results to your poor heart, occurs to you, you thrust it from you, you suffer it to be extinguished, like a lamp without oil.

Are these reproaches of your Lord and God groundless, young man ?

Truly, thoughtlessness is the especial fault of youth. The volatile imagination, the unripe judgment, the readiness of the senses to receive every impression, the desire to plunge as early as possible into the busy throng of life, — make reflection tedious, unlovely, and burdensome to the young.

Yet, after all, young people are the very ones who most pressingly need a ballast, in order to secure their frail bark against thousands of dangers, each one surpassing the other.

You wear yourself out in the service of the world.

In the vortex of temporal things, you are speedily dashed to pieces.

Heart and soul are wasted away, become dissipated through uninterrupted intercourse with creatures, to whom, finally, you belong more than to yourself.

Your thoughts flare aimlessly up, and are scattered, like sparks of fire ; one moment, they glimmer ; the next, they are lost to sight ; and others succeed them, to be, in turn, extinguished.

Why do you not more frequently turn your thoughts to God, and the salvation of your immortal soul ?

Why do you not, at least occasionally, fix them on those

impressive and overwhelming truths of which it is written : Remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin—(Eccles. 7 : 40)—?

Why do you so seldom take hold of a book which, containing good lessons, might instruct you in your duties, and bring wholesome truths to your mind ?

O earth, hear the word of the Lord. Thus, saith the Lord : Write this man barren, a man that shall not prosper in his days. (Jer. 22 : 29, 30.)

Without reflection and meditation, my young friend, there is no progress or growth in holiness, no proper life of the soul, no ripeness of virtue, no perfection.

Thoughtlessness scatters, destroys with its reckless foot, the germs of every good.

Thoughtlessness overlooks, suffers to glide by, unimproved and unprofitable, the most precious opportunities of merit and reward.

Thoughtlessness is deaf ; it pays no attention to the warnings of conscience ; it ridicules admonitions, jests at threats, misunderstands the call and time of grace.

A wise man feareth, and declineth from evil : the fool leapeth over, and is confident. (Prov. 14 : 16.)

Thoughtlessness rushes to the brink of the precipice, and if it fall not every time into the abyss, it is owing only to a special, undeserved providence.

Do you, also, wish to be numbered among those unhappy fools who are blind to their sublime destiny—to the great importance of life, the weighty issues of eternity which lie in their hands ?

How is it that you have time for everything, except for yourself and your immortal soul—for becoming somewhat conscious of yourself and ordering with due deliberation the state of your interior ? This is the most important affair you can engage in.

52.

THE PASSIONS.

"Go not after thy lusts, but turn away from thy own will."
(Ecclus. 18 : 30.)

The passions are the motions of our appetites, by which, through the representations of the imagination, and the sympathy of the senses, man is drawn towards a good, or from an evil.

These appetites, since they concern only the body, are solicitous chiefly for its preservation and gratification.

Love, desire, joy, hatred, aversion, sadness, grief, anger, temerity, fear, hope, despair, with their various gradations, strive for a so-called good, or struggle against a so-called evil, with greater or less violence, according to the liveliness of the representation, or the impressions received.

Human passions when bridled and ruled by reason, are by no means bad in themselves; on the contrary, as extraordinary powers of our nature employed on extraordinary occasions, they may be very helpful to us in attaining some very difficult good, or averting some tremendous approaching evil.

But since, in consequence of the sin of our first parents, these powers also have been vitiated; since the darkened understanding and the weakened will materially facilitate their excesses, they are the chief promoters of bad morals, and the abundant sources of disorder and sin.

They mainly serve the world and Satan; and if, moreover, through defective or misdirected education, bad surroundings, or untoward circumstances, these passions have grown in strength, while the temper and tendency of the mind afford them support and nourishment, there is no moral corruption into which they are not capable of leading man.

Truly, a heavy yoke is upon the children of Adam, from the day of their coming out of their mother's womb, until the day of their burial into the mother of all. (Ecclus. 40 : 1.)

Indeed, the corruptible body is a load upon the soul Wisd. 9 : 15); and : I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind. (Rom. 7 : 33.)

To bridle these passions is the task of life.

Our labor must be to see that they do not rise at wrong times, fasten upon bad objects, or overstep the limits of prudence and wisdom, even in lawful things.

The life of man upon earth is a warfare. (Job 7 : 1.)

The necessity of this warfare is self-evident.

If only one of these passions existed in man, prayer, vigilance, combat, would be necessary — indispensable. And now, there are so many of them, which, like savage beasts, struggle for our possession.

Without this bridling of the passions, man is no longer man.

Without this taming of the passions, there is no true peace of heart, no repose, no harmony of the soul.

Without this bridling of the passions, there is no moral resemblance of the soul to God, no perception of higher things, no truly fruitful will.

Therefore, the Almighty, in such an emphatic manner, tells us : Go not after thy lusts, but turn away from thy own will. (Ecclus. 18 : 30.) The lust thereof shall be under thee, and thou shalt have dominion over it. (Gen. 4 : 7.)

And this warfare must extend to each one of your passions.

Each individual passion resembles a tiny spark of fire, which, if neglected or unguarded, is capable of changing the grandest palace into a heap of ruins, and of leveling to the ground, reducing to a desert, the most beautiful and populous cities of the earth.

Each individual passion resembles a snowflake which goes to make the avalanche. Descending from the mountain-top, growing as it rolls, the mighty mass of snow and ice rushes down into the fathomless abyss, carrying ruin and destruction in its path.

Our battle with the passions must last for life.

I must be a soldier as long as I am a pilgrim on earth.

As long as I tarry here below, I carry within me the fatal spark of evil, which must always be watched, dampened, and extinguished.

Youth, in particular, is the time of warfare against passions and perverted inclinations. Youth is the time of their development. They seek for objects, they look for confederates—the ardor of youth, its instability, volatility, curiosity, inexperience, weakness,—all come to their aid.

Young man, gird thyself. (Acts 12 : 8.)

Mighty enemies surround your soul. (Ps. 16 : 9.) Fat bulls besiege you. They open their mouths against you, as a lion ravening and roaring (Ps. 21 : 13, 14), in order to devour you.

Do not delay. Take up this warfare with courage and determination. It is decisive.

The dwelling of your heart yet belongs to you ; will you then permit your enemy to take possession of it ?

This warfare is easy now—much more so than when your passions shall have grown stronger, and fortified themselves securely in your heart.

Which is easier,—to pull up the young plant, root and branch, or to uproot the full-grown tree ?

Which is more readily overcome,—the weak boy, or the strong, robust man ?

Is it less toil to dam up the shallow little creek, than the deep, flowing, wildly-rushing river ?

53.

THE PREDOMINANT PASSION.

"*If thou give thy soul her desires, she will make thee the joy of thy enemies.*" (Ecclus. 18 : 13.)

Various passions may struggle in your heart, as warriors on a battle-field ; but, in the end, one of them will certainly outdo the others, and strive for absolute dominion.

Yes, every man has a certain evil inclination, a certain predominant passion.

It is, as it were, the red thread which runs through the whole web of life, and gives color to it.

It is the main-spring which sets a multitude of wheels in motion.

What is your predominant passion ?

Is it levity, superficiality ?

Is it sloth, dread of labor and exertion ?

Is it sensuality, the lust of pleasure, and animal enjoyment ?

Is it ambition, vanity, excessive desire of pleasing, human respect ?

s it lukewarmness, coldness towards God and divine things ?

s it envy ? avarice ? anger ? falsehood ? want of charity ? the spirit of independence ? of rebellion ?

Is it despondency, narrow-mindedness, cowardice ?

You can easily discover your predominant passion, if you will only take the trouble to reflect.

What are the faults which again and again are the subject of accusation in your confessions ? What is the name of their common source ?

What fault is that with which you reproach yourself most frequently when you examine your conscience (as I hope you do) every evening ?

What is it that most easily excites you ? that most frequently comes before the soul ? that most constantly occupies your thoughts ? that others, who know you, unanimously condemn in you ? that, with ever-renewed vitality, springs up in your heart, disguised, it may be, under vaious forms, but ever originating from one and the same root ?

To make an assault upon this stronghold, to unceasingly fight against your predominant passions, is of paramount importance.

Is it not, in a certain measure, the hot-bed of all disorder, of all sedition in your interior ?

Is it not the centre around which all the morbid matter of your sickly heart collects, in order afterwards to break out in divers poisonous wounds ?

If you were master of this passion, the victory over all the others, would be not only easier, but also more lasting.

It would be easier,—for, how can the outworks resist him who has succeeded in storming the strong-hold ?

It would be more lasting,—for, when the chief enemy

is beaten, the bond of union is wanting among the confederates, and, with it, the possibility of united action, and the earnest renewal of past hostilities.

Young man, if you allow one predominant passion to overcome you, you will soon become the slave of many.

A passion grows, it increases ; like a poisonous plant, it draws to itself all the corruption of your evil nature ; it spreads itself, it conceals under its dark, awfully-fruitful shadow, a multitude of other noxious plants and parasites ; it fosters them, lending them the support of its stem, so that they may climb up from this dark and gloomy corner, and send forth destructive woes to flood your whole heart.

No, if you give your soul her desires, she will make you the joy of your enemies. (Ecclus. 18 : 13.)

That a man may be thrust into the deepest perdition through the indulgence of one passion, is plainly shown in the case of Judas, the fallen disciple of Jesus. The inordinate love of money made him a thief—a traitor to God ; a suicide, the most unhappy of men, of whom Jesus himself said : It were better for him if that man had not been born. (Matt. 26 : 24.)

Hence, from this time forward, pay attention to your predominant passion.

Watch carefully over it. Search for it diligently in your examinations of conscience, and in your preparations for confession. Be ever attentive to it. Notice carefully its growth, and its concatenation with the other passions. Oppose it by frequently-renewed, firm resolutions. Ask your spiritual director to suggest to you the means of resisting it.

O, my dear young friend, is not your soul worth this, and still greater, care and pain ?

Is it not easier than, through all eternity, to be forced to

cry out incessantly : My uncharitableness, my pride, my sensuality, my sloth, my avarice, or my envy, has brought me to hell !

O understand, ye senseless among the people : and, you fools, be wise at last. (Ps. 93 : 8.)

54.

AVARICE.

"*Covetousness is the root of all evils.*" (1. Tim. 6 : 10.)

Undoubtedly, a young man, because he has not come into his estates, and also because of his levity and short-sightedness, which make him, as yet, think little of the future, is more inclined to extravagance, than to attachment to money and goods

But, in these days of ours, when there is such an absorbing passion for money-getting among both great and small, and when the perfection of science, and of labor-saving inventions, feeds the inordinate inclinations of the sensual and the ambitious,—the idol of even the young begins to be money. Youth, as well as old age, worships the Golden Calf.

Sad forerunner of an unhappy future ! Dark source of many present errors !

You begin to place an inordinate value on the goods of this world. You esteem as great and happy those who are blessed with temporal prosperity ; you become sordid and stingy, and are grieved beyond measure at any loss. Your heart grows restless, and expends itself in desires of wealth ;

you search for means and ways by which you may attain riches. By degrees, you pass from honest, to less honest, and finally, to criminal means of attaining your end. Ultimately, your motto is : Make money at any price ;—and an abyss of worthlessness and dishonor opens under your feet.

Covetousness is the root of all evils. (1. Tim. 6 : 10.)

Lesser breaches of trust lead up to embezzlement, theft, robbery, cheating, over-reaching one's neighbor, retaining unjustly-acquired goods, avaricious accumulation of money. Hardness towards the poor, needy, and suffering; parsimony, miserliness towards one's self and others ; forgetfulness of God, of heaven, and of eternity,—all these proceed from this one root : The desire of money.

The rich man is always puffed up. In his opinion, external goods supply for interior goodness. He leans upon the temporal ; he thinks he can do without God, can secure all things with money. Our mighty hand, says he, and not the Lord, hath done all these things. (Deut. 32 : 27.)

And, indeed, a golden key opens many locks. The door to all vices is quickly opened, when struck by the magic wand of gold or silver.

If they who wish to become rich, fall into temptation and many snares (1. Tim. 6 : 9) ; how much more are those not free from sin, who are actually rich (Ecclus. 11 : 10), and who delight in their wealth ?

But, young man, what are riches ?

Are they not rubbish and earth, like everything else, here below ?

Are they not transitory, unstable, inconstant ?

Shall they not be wrested from us at the hour of death ?

Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee : and whose shall those things be which thou hast provided ? (Luke 12 : 20.)

The rich man, when he shall sleep (die), shall take noth-

ing away with him : he shall open his eyes, and find nothing. Poverty, like water, shall take hold on him ; a tempest shall oppress him in the night : a burning wind shall take him up, and carry him away; and as a whirlwind, shall snatch him from his place. (Job 27 : 19-21.)

Suddenly, then, unexpectedly, irresistibly, and irretrievably, will he suffer the loss of all earthly goods.

Alas ! how miserable is he who serves this passion !

What toil in the acquisition, what anxiety in the possession, what grief at the loss, of earthly goods !

Count the sleepless nights of the avaricious man.

There, plans and difficulties ; here, distrust and suspicion ; then, again, timidity and fear.

That which one loves, he seeks with ardor.

That which one loves, he dreads to lose.

And faith suffers loss ; for covetousness wants to see, and to touch, and to count, while faith is the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that appear not. (Hebr. 11 : 1.)

Hope grows sick and languishing ; for men trust in the uncertainty of riches. (1. Tim. 6 : 17.)

And charity becomes cold ; for it degenerates into selfishness, feeding itself. (Jude 1 : 12.)

How true is the saying : Better is a little, with the fear of the Lord, than great treasures, without content (Prov. 15 : 16) !

If riches abound, set not your heart upon them. (Ps. 61. 11.)

Give me neither beggary, nor riches ; give me only the necessaries of life. Lest, perhaps, being filled, I should be tempted to deny, and say : Who is the Lord ? or being compelled .by poverty, I should steal, and forswear the name of my God. (Prov. 30 : 8, 9.)

It may, however, happen to a young man to be enslaved

to the vice of avarice, less from the love of money in itself than because it furnishes the means to gratify his various passions.

He desires to enjoy himself—he needs money.

He wishes to collect around himself friends and companions ; he must entertain them with feasting and wines.

All these things cost money.

Which is worse : To love money in order to keep and hoard it up ; or, to love it in order to spend it, and squander it, for the gratification of our own inordinate desires ?

The greed of money-getting becomes the source of manifold sins. Parents, guardians, and superiors are deceived ; perhaps, their hard earnings are forced from them. Gaming, solely with the desire of winning, fraudulent gains, concealment of stolen goods, theft, robbery, even murder or suicide, follow in its train.

O my young friend, search your heart !

If you find that you are too much attached to the goods of this world, do not rest until you have stifled that inordinate affection.

If you thirst after money, in order to gratify your inclination for enjoyment and pleasure, put a curb upon it, and learn moderation and necessary self-denial.

If you are rich, know that you owe your wealth to God, and that you must, one day, render him an account of everything you possess.

Remember, further, that many go to destruction on account of riches ; and that these are the words of Christ : How hard is it for them that trust in riches, to enter into the kingdom of God ! (Mark 10 : 24.) Therefore, you must labor the more to work out your salvation with fear and trembling. (Phil. 2 : 12.)

Set not your heart upon money. Money, in itself, is not evil ; it is the inordinate attachment to it that makes it a heavy weight, dragging us down to the lowest abyss.

Live according to your station in life, but plainly. Use your wealth in moderation, and in a manner consistent with God's holy designs.

Love the poor, and rejoice that God has appointed you their almoner. Be generous to them, and obey the words of the Lord : Lay not up to yourselves treasures on earth : where the rust and moth consume, and where thieves break through and steal. (Matt. 6 : 19, 20.) Make unto you friends of the mammon of iniquity. (Luke 16 : 9) Learn to experience in yourselves, that it is a more blessed thing to give, than to receive. (Acts 20 : 35.) A generous, open-handed young man—what a noble, edifying spectacle !

If you be poor, do not murmur, but rather rejoice in your resemblance to Jesus.

Undeserved poverty is no disgrace ; and even merited poverty, through resignation becomes meritorious. The Lord maketh poor and maketh rich. (1. Kings 2 : 7.)

But, be poor in spirit (Matt. 5 : 3) ; otherwise, your poverty is without merit. Only such poor are pronounced blessed by our Lord.

Have confidence in God. He who clothes the lilies of the field, so that their beauty surpasses even the glory of Solomon (Matt. 6 : 29), will not forget you. Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God, and his justice : and all these things shall be added unto you. (Matt. 6 : 33.)

If you be neither rich nor poor, do not be disquieted. If we have food and raiment, let us be satisfied. (1. Tim. 6 : 8.)

Away, then, with all discontent, despondency, unnecessary cares, and inordinate desires !

One thing only is necessary : That our souls may not, one day, be found poor and naked. For the rest,—cast thy care upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee ; he shall not suffer the just to waver for ever. (Ps. 54 : 23.)

55.

SELFISHNESS.

"*Now, to the king of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever.*" (1. Tim. 1 : 17.)

God is necessarily the centre, the aim, the criterion, of all. All things are made by him : and without him, was made nothing that was made. (John 1 : 3.)

Nevertheless, man,—impious wretch that he is,—invades the divine rights, and forgets the infinite distance which reason and faith both clearly indicate as existing between God and himself. He fancies himself great, wise, and strong ; he wishes to refer all things to himself ; and claims for himself, the love and respect of all

His egotism displays itself in everything.

His relation to God, yes, even his exercises of devotion, proceed from selfishness.

You pray—not so much that God may be honored thereby, as that your prayer may profit you, because it affords you consolation,—because you expect from it elevating sentiments and pleasant emotions. This is your aim.

And if God seem to withdraw himself, and you feel his presence less sensibly—if your petitions are not immediately granted, you grow cold ; your prayer becomes tepid and less frequent ; you murmur against God, and presumptuously plunge into worldly distractions.

In your relations with your neighbor, this mischievous

selfishness also creeps in. You strive for his good opinion ; but it is not because he represents the person of Christ. You pay him respect, treat him kindly, are lenient or generous with him : but, because you expect the same in return from him ; because you count, at least, upon his gratitude or good will. If these be wanting, if you be disappointed in your hopes, coldness takes the place of friendliness, your hand is withheld, your generosity dries up, your activity is paralyzed.

Finally, selfishness works no less injury to ourselves. It resembles the moth, which spares not the most costly robes—or the worm, which disfigures and destroys the fairest fruits.

We are the first admirers of our own real or imaginary virtues : we are the first to overlook, or, at least, excuse, our own faults.

We praise ourselves, esteem ourselves ; we are engrossed in, and for, ourselves. We are enamored with ourselves, centred in ourselves ; we refer all things to ourselves.

Self-love is the chief motive of all our words and actions. It is as if the whole world, yea, even God himself, existed only for our use and benefit.

If a young man fall a victim to egotistic selfishness, all that is noble and fair in him, perishes. The most pleasing ornaments of youth,—delicacy of sentiment, candor, simplicity, freshness of mind,—wither away and die.

He becomes stiff, smooth, icy : his courtesy degenerates into affectation or servility, his love into pretense, his thoughts into self-admiration, his speech into bombast.—his whole being becomes unnatural.

He studies, not in order to acquire knowledge, but in order to shine in society ; he is obedient and respectful, in order to stand well with his superiors ; he is polite and obliging, in order to be loved

It is as if he constantly saw himself only, and as if this one self-conscious question were always upon his lips : And I ?

That which delights him is praise ; that which wounds him is blame. Success makes him overbearing ; failure strikes him to the ground.

He is capricious ; he is an extremist ; he seeks singularity, loves to be considered uncommon.

Selfishness gradually leads through all these degrees of meanness.

It feeds on itself, it lives upon itself,—for itself, in itself, and with itself.

And yet, O my God, all is from thee, for thee, in thee, and with thee ! To thee, the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen. (1. Tim. 1 : 17.)

Egotism is a crying injustice to God, whose absolute dominion it opposes, whose honor it diminishes, whose gracious purposes it counteracts.

It is the enemy of man ; for it brings discord into the great brotherhood of humanity, opposing interest to interest, awakening suspicion, envy, quarrels, inciting to violence, cruelty, bloodshed.

It works incalculable injury to the individual ; for it draws him away from the one true Good, delivers him to hollowness, insufficiency, and nothingness ; throws him into the arms of evil, and robs him of peace and repose.

Take selfishness away,—and crimes cease, innocence returns, the pilgrim of earth proceeds safely upon his way ; love and concord change this valley of tears into a paradise of delights, and the golden age revisits the universe.

Take selfishness away,—and all the thoughts and actions of men revert to God. They will love and serve him again for his own sake, on account of his goodness and

infinite perfections ; they will be content with all his rulings, humble in prosperity, hopeful in adversity. Each one will see himself in his fellow-man ; and, instead of lording it over others, will bear and forbear, serving all with magnanimity, self-sacrifice, and devotedness.

Then, the great command will be fulfilled literally : Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. and thy neighbor as thyself. (Matt. 22 : 37-39.)

56.

VAINGLORY

"Not to us, O Lord, not to us ; but to thy name, give glory." (Ps. 113 : 1.)

Man is full of himself. If he have talents, good qualities, he esteems them greater than they really are ; or, he ascribes them only to himself. If he lack the reality, he plumes himself upon, and basks in, an imaginary greatness and glory.

Poor human hearts, fed by wind and froth !

Youth, especially, is easily tempted to pride itself upon qualities which it does not possess.

The young man feels that his knowledge is yet superficial, insufficient—his activity, of little endurance.

He sees around him so many who, as in age, so in talents, skill, culture, tact, decision, and firmness of character, are superior to himself.

And he wishes to overleap the gulf of years, and be now

what he is yet to become. The shadow of wisdom is called upon to supply the missing substance.

External advantages are estimated very highly : Birth, fortune, beauty, bodily strength, polite manners. Even interior good qualities are overvalued, such as talent, acuteness, memory, character, goodness of heart, honor, virtue.

Hence, arise self-confidence, contempt of others, rash judgments, unjust accusations, domineering conduct, arrogance, and empty boasting. Personal defects are sedulously concealed. One puts himself forward on all occasions. By dress, carriage, gait, tone of voice, gesture,—by singularity, or by mock modesty and hypocritical humility, one aids in placing the idol—Self—upon its throne, and bespeaks for it the homage of an admiring world.

Ridiculous, pitiable ambition ! What have you, O man, that you have not received ? And if you have received, why do you glory, as if you had not received it ? (1. Cor. 4 : 7.)

Are you, because you think yourself to be something, any less dependent upon the Author of your being ? Is he not able, at any moment, to deprive you of what you call your own ?

Do you think that the piercing eye of God cannot penetrate the cloud of incense in which you seek to envelop yourself ?—that he does not know your misery, of both body and soul, as it is, and as it will, one day, be manifested to the whole world ?

You say, and try to make others believe : I am rich and made wealthy, and have need of nothing ; and you know not that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. (Apoc. 3 : 17.)

That which you are in reality, you are before God ; yourself and others you may deceive, but him you cannot deceive.

What is honor, young man ?

Every man is born for honor and greatness ; for every one is destined to possess God.

God is great, because he has all things in himself, and stands in need of no one. Man is great, when he receives and hopes for all things from the supreme Greatness only.

All that is added by creatures is weakness and poverty. Yet, you go around begging from them a substitute for the real good which you have lost by your sins, a phantom renown for that substantial greatness which you have not in yourself.

What is honor, young man ?

Honor is truth. Honor can never be found in falsehood and deception.

If you deceive yourself by falsely ascribing anything to yourself,—if you deceive others by representing yourself as you are not,—can there be any question of honor ? Such honor is the greatest dishonor.

Seek honor only in truth, and in genuine greatness.

Instead of imposing upon others what you are not, endeavor to become what you ought to be.

That which, in spite of all your good will and exertion, you cannot obtain, can never be a disgrace to you.

Weakness, deformity, poverty, dullness of comprehension, untoward circumstances, are no disgrace.

Can that be a disgrace which depends not upon ourselves either to receive or to keep ? Just as little as that is an honor to us which, without our co-operation or merit, we have received. Not to us, O Lord, not to us ; but to thy name give glory. (Ps. 113 : 1.)

All that we are, we are by the grace of God ; and therefore, we are bound to give thanks to him for the least of his gifts, no less than for the greatest.

I am only in this world to glorify God, and all my bones shall say : Lord, who is like to thee ? (Ps. 34 : 10.)

Yes, thou alone art holy, thou alone art powerful. To the Lord our God belongeth justice, but to us, confusion of face. (Baruch 1 : 15.)

Amen. Benediction, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, honor, and power, and strength, to our God for ever and ever. Amen. (Apoc. 7 : 12.)

57.

AMBITION.

"*Thou hast said : I am God . . . and thou hast set thy heart as if it were the heart of God.*" (Ezech. 28 : 2.)

Self-love, when carried to an excess, really degenerates into idolatry of self.

Thus, says the Lord God : Because thy heart is lifted up, thou hast said : I am God, and I sit in the chair of God, in the heart of the sea ; whereas, thou art a man, and not God ; and hast set thy heart, as if it were the heart of God. (Ezech. 28 : 2.)

This happens when man ascribes everything to himself, admires himself, delights in his own good qualities, claims honor and respect from all around him, and makes self-glorification the aim of all his words and actions.

God, who possesses the fulness of all essence, who is the source of all good, and the centre of all beings, must refer everything to himself : he rests in himself, delights in himself, and demands praise and glory from his rational creatures. This flows from the Godhead as a necessary result.

The creature who usurps this prerogative of the Creator, appropriates to himself, so to speak, the heart, the mind, the will, and desire of God.

How displeasing must this be to God ! I, the Lord, this is my name : I will not give my glory to another, nor my praise to graven things. (Ps. 42 : 8.) And : Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high, and looketh down on the low things in heaven, and in earth ? (Ps. 112. 5, 6.)

What a contrast between such a mode of thought and speech, and our own misery, our undeniable dependence upon God !

Ambition is chiefly anxious about the future.

It indulges in desires of praise, recognition, influence, distinction, high position.

It longs for greater faculties, in order to shine more brilliantly, and cast others more deeply into obscurity.

It dreams of honor and glory, and draws splendid pictures of its future greatness.

It forms plans, and ruminates on projects ; it removes obstacles, and prepares paths for itself.

It pushes all rivals to the wall, supplanting or frightening away one, out-running the other, or making him feel the weight of its superiority.

It loves what brings honor, and hates whatever causes it to be overlooked, or forced into the background.

Its motto is *Excelsior !* No barrier seems insurmountable, no goal unattainable, to it.

The moment in which, without a rival or superior, the ambitious soul might behold the whole world prostrate before it, would alone satisfy all its longings and desires. Thou hast said : I am God.

How much human blood has not ambition already shed ! How many wrongs, injustices, and deeds of violence has it

not perpetrated against individuals, as well as against entire nations!

And O, how it undermines peace of heart and soul! Even in the path of honor, thorns are to be found—insults, neglect, opposition, crossing of plans, fear, envy, jealousy, hatred, enmity, and revenge.

What torture, if the end be not attained! Such a waste of energy, all in vain!

And if honor turn into disgrace, the only alternative left is to end an insupportable existence by the cowardly weapon of the suicide!

Yes, to such an extent can this passion thrive, which, because it has nothing in common with carnal lowness, frequently appears to us so excusable, sometimes, even wearing the nimbus of a certain heroism.

Yet, young man, consider the essence of pride, and discover in it a perverseness, perhaps, hitherto unsuspected.

In every sin, we distinguish two evils: The turning from the Creator, and a turning to the creature.

The turning to the creature, bad as it is, is not the worst feature in sin. That which renders sin, in a certain measure, an infinite evil, is the turning from the Creator, the highest, best, and only Good.

The malice of every sin is to be measured by this standard. As regards the turning to the creature, ambition does not seem to us as objectionable and reprehensible as other vices, especially those of lust and sensuality. Honor ranks higher than gross, carnal pleasures; it is, so to speak, of a spiritual nature; but as regards the turning from the Creator, ambition is much more reprehensible.

It withdraws us more from God; it makes us more his enemies; it infringes upon what is most properly his own.

Earthly goods and earthly pleasures stand outside of God's domain, and are only his goods in as far as man uses them

as a means of glorifying him. But honor, which proceeds from the purely spiritual part of man, and is based on it ; honor, which arises from knowledge on the part of the understanding, and from affection on the part of the will,—is the only external good which the Lord God can receive from his rational creatures.

This honor he deserves in the highest degree, and he claims it alone as a tribute to his goodness and greatness ; this is the only aim and object in, and of, all his external operations.

Pride wounds God most sensibly in this point, and, so to speak, makes man his rival.

Hence, there is question here, not merely of turning away obliquely, but in a directly opposite direction.

All this applies to ambition—at least, when it reaches a high degree,—when man, with full consciousness and consent of the will, gives himself up to this vice—when it is not a mere sudden fit of the imagination, but a deliberate rupture—an open declaration of war against God.

Moreover, ambition increases the malice of every other vice, with which it associates itself.

It is on account of this pride, that God sometimes permits a man to fall into shameful sins of the flesh. There and then, in a bottomless abyss of humiliation, he may see and know the value of his imaginary greatness.

My dear young friend, never suffer this noxious plant to take root in your heart. And though flatterers, blinded parents, or ill-advised teachers, should endeavor to promote its growth, and self-love unceasingly furnish it with nourishment, look to it that it does not thrive.

Give glory to God. (John 9 : 24.) Firmly believe that God will take care of your honor in the same measure that you are careless and unconcerned about it.

If you do not seek your own honor, nor the honor of men, God will honor you. And, what an honor to be honored

by him who esteems only what is worthy of esteem ; and whose esteem alone is valuable, because he alone is the highest, greatest, best, and most perfect !

58.

ENVY.

"*Soundness of heart is the life of the flesh : but envy is the rottenness of the bones.*" (Prov. 14 : 30.)

God, the Master of all, distributes according to his own wise judgment, the goods of this life, both interior and exterior.

Wealth, honor, health, beauty, talent, character—over all these, and similar gifts, he has an unlimited right.

How unjustly, therefore, yea, how arrogantly, do I act, when I envy any one of my fellow-men the advantages bestowed upon him by the Lord !

That mere desire which arises in even the best-regulated hearts at the sight of another's good luck,—that wish to enjoy a similar prosperity, — is not envy ; it is a natural and pardonable emotion.

The fault begins only when the uneasiness of the heart begins ; and it increases in proportion to the growth of the uneasy desire, which darkens the mind, poisons the heart, and manifests itself outwardly in evil words or deeds.

Truly, envy is an ignoble vice !

By the envy of the devil, death came into the world. (Wisd. 2 : 24.) And, up to this day, all the evil which by

God's permission, Satan causes in the world proceeds from the envy of that evil spirit. He cannot bear that beings of an inferior nature should inherit and occupy the seats of the fallen angels in heaven, and, as co-regents with God, set their victorious foot upon the neck of the rebels. And he does injury whenever, wherever, and however he can, even at the risk of thereby increasing his own torments.

O ignoble vice, which makes me resemble Satan !

I envy this one his talents, his quickness of comprehension, his penetration, his memory, his progress in his studies, and the praise which he thereby acquires. Another, I begrudge his birth, his wealth, his beauty, his favor with superiors, his prospects of a splendid future.

Perhaps, my envy even extends to advantages which a person has acquired or increased by his own exertions.

His piety, his modesty, his politeness, his affability, his sweetness, and suavity of manners, his diligence, his merit, his virtue, are as so many thorns in my flesh. I can hardly restrain my hatred ; and the bitterness of my perverted heart is often betrayed by malicious looks, spiteful words, and offensive deeds.

O mean vice ! Begotten of narrowness of heart and selfishness ; its only aim is the personal pronoun I. Another must not enjoy an advantage which I do not possess. This is Envy.

O foolish vice ! By envy, you acquire nothing. You labor rather, in a certain sense, at the destruction of what you have, by making yourself unworthy of possessing it any longer.

How easily you might call down God's vengeance upon your insatiable greed ! He may say to you : Go then, ingrate, beggar in soul, in heart, in virtue, in honor, and gold,—go, tire yourself to death, grieve, fret, worry, con-

sume yourself ! I am the origin and fountain of every blessing ; you no longer deserve my favors. Go, cursed be the earth in thy work (Gen. 3 : 17) ; when thou shalt till it, it shall not yield to thee its fruit (Gen. 4 : 12) ; and even thy spiritual soil, thy understanding and heart, shall bear the curse of barrenness. I will break the pride of your stubbornness ; and I will make to you the heaven above as iron, and the earth as brass ; your labor shall be spent in vain : the ground shall not bring forth her increase, nor the trees yield their fruit. (Lev. 26 : 19, 20.)

O foolish vice ! You waste time and strength, and yet you cannot overtake the good luck of your neighbor, which you view with envious eyes.

Why are you drawn together with grief ? (Mich. 4 : 9.) Soundness of heart is the life of the flesh, but envy is the rottenness of the bones. (Prov. 14 : 30.)

O ruinous vice ! It destroys our peace of soul, involves us in misery, awakens a cruel pleasure at the misfortunes of others, nourishes rash judgments, arouses suspicions, calls forth calumnies and animosities. It entangles in the narrow circle of petty aims, cripples the powers of thought and action, darkens the heart, awakens enmities, enkindles the desire of revenge, counsels the use of wretched measures, and only too often, has drawn the dagger, mixed the poison, and led to deeds of violence, rapine, and murder !

Behold how the young earth is reddened for the first time by blood ! And it is—the blood of a brother !

Cain was exceedingly angry, because Abel's sacrifice was more pleasing to God than his own : and his countenance fell. And Cain said to Abel his brother : Let us go forth abroad. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel, and slew him. (Gen. 4 : 5, 8.)

O infamous vice ! The envy of the Pharisees fastened the God-Man to the cross. They did not know the time of

their visitation; and, with eyes blinded by envy, they refused to recognize the Holy One, the Expectation of the ages, the Desired of all nations! Their envy divided for ever between them and their God. You are not my people, and I will not be yours. (Osee 1 : 9.)

Thus, it is true, the eye of the envious is wicked ; and he turneth away his face, and despiseth his own soul. (Ecclus. 14 : 8.)

My dear young man, lock your heart against this low, contemptible vice.

All that you have, you have from God ; and if you only make good use of it, it will be sufficient for gaining the end of your creation.

For that which you have not, you will not be held responsible. If God wished you to possess it, he would have given it to you, or would have opened to you ways for its acquisition. Would you desire to possess any gift or good that was opposed to God's will?

My friend, instead of wasting time with pernicious thoughts of envy, or embittering your life by sinful sorrow, rejoice in what you have, and derive all the profit possible from it. It is only for this, that you will be called to account.

The least gift received from God's hand with gratitude, and wisely employed, suffices to enrich us for eternity.

O, fly from envy, that venomous vice! Its poisonous breath blowing over the blooming fields of youth, destroys all their fresh beauty, even as the fierce sirocco blasts the beauties of nature. If you do not oppose its influence, it will soon be all over with the freshness of your heart, your simplicity, your cheerfulness, your present and future happiness.

And how will it be with you in after-life, when more important and decisive issues arise for you,—such as, position, influence, and fortune?

59.

IDLENESS.

"*Idleness hath taught much evil.*" (Ecclus. 33 : 29.)

To be idle is to do nothing.

But it is, also, a species of idleness either not to do what one should, or to do badly what one does.

Nothing becomes youth less than idleness—laziness.

Young man, can your past show anything that gives you a right or a claim to repose?

And your present life? It demands of you vigor, vivacity, activity, energy, exertion. Idleness is premature old age. To be idle is to decay, to die, to rot.

The future imperatively demands of you activity. If time be yours, care must be taken to educate mind and heart. If it be not yours—if time shall soon be no more (Apoc. 10 6) for you, then something must be done now, in order that you may not appear before God, like the unprofitable servant in the Gospel, with empty hands, and a buried talent. (Matt. 25 : 35.)

Idleness is ingratitude to God, who has given us powers of soul and body, that we should employ, and make good use of them.

Idleness is robbery of God's most precious gift—Time.

Idleness is an insult to God. Inactivity deforms us by rendering us most unlike to him who is eternal activity.

Idleness is injustice. We are members of human society ; our neighbor has claims upon our services, in the family, the state, the church.

It is injustice to those who have acquired by toil and labor, that which we so slothfully squander ; and to those who would have made good use of that which, through our fault, remains inoperative, and consequently, fruitless.

Idleness gives a very bad example to the neighbor ; he is enticed to imitate our sloth. Perhaps, he may even be tempted to murmur against God's providence, because the yoke of painful exertion presses upon him the more heavily the less his fellow-man consents to share it.

What a contrast between the idler and the world of nature around him ! It—in constant activity, ever fulfilling God's immutable law ; he— evading every exertion—inactive—refusing to correspond with God's holy purposes.

Idleness frequently draws after it temporal damage, contempt, and poverty. He that followeth idleness shall be filled with poverty. (Prov. 28 : 19.)

Idleness injures the faculties of the soul. I passed by the field of the slothful man, and by the vineyard of the foolish man : and behold, it was filled with nettles ; and thorns had covered the face thereof ; and the stone wall was broken down. (Prov. 24 : 30, 31.)

Idleness corrupts the heart, and teaches much evil (Ecclus. 33 : 29) ; it is the cess-pool of the soul.

Foul vapors arise from stagnant waters, and idle, dangerous, bad, abominable thoughts, from inactive hearts—thoughts which may become desires, and end in shameful actions.

Idleness effeminates and enervates ; it robs the mind of its penetration, the character of its firmness, and the soul of its plenitude.

Idleness accustoms to disgraceful defeats.

Idleness makes insolent the enemies of our salvation. Seeing us so careless, they reckon upon the results of our cowardice.

Idleness is the confederate of all other vices ; it opens the way for them into the sick and timid heart.

Idleness is proud. Arrogance must supply for true merit, conceit for knowledge, outward appearances for interior solidity and worth. The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit, than seven men that speak sentences. (Prov. 26 : 16.)

Idleness is envious ; the prosperity or success of his neighbor puts the slothful man out of humor.

Idleness loves to intrench itself behind untruth ; it has recourse to hypocrisy and deceit.

Idleness, not unfrequently, is extravagant. And how often has it not stretched forth its hands to steal that which it was too lazy to earn in a legitimate way.

Idleness hates reprehension and correction ; it dislikes to be disturbed ; it is quarrelsome, and easily becomes stubborn.

Idleness inveighs against others uncharitably : it is suspicious and slanderous.

Idleness is curious, and keeps open all the gates of the senses.

Idleness often gives way to excess in eating and drinking : and seeks gratification and pastime in low pursuits.

Idleness leads to forgetfulness of God ; for, true prayer is a labor, even if it be a labor of love.

Idleness is inconstant. The sluggard willeth, and willeth not. (Prov. 13 : 4.)

Idleness is cowardly. The slothful man saith : There is a lion without. I shall be slain in the midst of the streets. (Prov. 22 : 13.)

Idleness is pusillanimous. Desires kill the slothful. (Prov.

21 : 15.) He dares nothing for heaven ; no reward entices him, no crown incites him to effort.

Go to the ant, O sluggard, and consider her ways, and learn wisdom. (Prov. 6 : 6.)

An idle, lazy young man—O what a sad sight ! A spring without the sun's warmth, no verdure, no blossom, no fragrance,—no hope ! The fig-tree shall not blossom : and there shall be no spring in the vines. The labor of the olive-tree shall fail : and the field shall yield no fruit. (Hab. 3 : 17.)

O, bear ever in mind that sentence of the Lord, and fear : Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be cut down, and cast into the fire. (Luke 3 : 9.)

60.

AN INORDINATE LONGING FOR PLEASURE.

"*Behold, this was the iniquity of Sodom . . . pride, fulness of bread, and abundance.*" (Ezech. 16 : 49.)

An immoderate longing for pleasure, a continual desire to gratify sensuality, directly contradicts the purpose of our existence, the destiny of creatures. It interferes more than anything else, with that serious attention to the one thing necessary, which is the task of life.

Moderate recreation is a necessity to man ; the spirit needs relaxation, the body, refreshment.

But, O my God, where the whole effort of the mind is directed only to diversion ; where, without choice and meas-

ure, every enjoyment is indiscriminately indulged in; where the soul suffers on account of the senses; where the supernatural is sacrificed to the natural, time to eternity, the unchangeable to the perishable,—there, the line so wisely drawn by thee, O God, is overstepped! There, I come into contradiction with thy holiest purposes, and run the risk of making an exceedingly foolish and injurious exchange.

Alas! this insatiable thirst for enjoyment, this greedy lust of pleasure, is one of the most devastating distempers of our time, the ever-gnawing worm of our generation.

Grounded in our own concupiscence, awakened by the inventions of pomp, ease, and sensual luxury, nourished by an effeminate education, by coddling and over-indulgence in the bosom of the family, sanctioned and recommended by universal example,—the immoderate longing after enjoyment becomes more and more the predominant vice not only of the individual, but of society in general.

When eye and ear, taste and smell, senses and members can no more deny themselves anything they crave; when to crave is to appropriate to one's self all that is attainable,—there arise a total surrender to sensual things, a complete renunciation of all high and noble efforts, which soon deprive life of its pure, spiritual direction, and reduce it to the level of the brutes.

Son, remember that thou didst receive good things in thy life-time, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now, he is comforted, and thou art tormented. (Luke 16: 25.)

Come, let us enjoy the good things that are present; let us every where leave tokens of joy. (Wisd. 2: 6-9.) Thus, have the sensual thought—and thus, have they woefully deceived themselves!

Behold the amusements to which the world devotes itself, and into whose abyss the allured, misguided youth is

thrown ! Dancing, gambling, banqueting, masking, theatricals, sports. What do they aim at ? At useful or moderate recreation, which, alone, can benefit man ? No, simply at enjoyment.

If this were not so, the majority would not come back from these amusements with defiled hearts, with destroyed peace, confusion of conscience, disgust, and yet, an ever-increasing greed

Gaining, once become a habit and a passion, brings disorder into business, furnishes an occasion to prodigality, quarrels, hatred, cursing, and rudeness.

Even apart from the immoral principles which theatrical amusements almost always inculcate, — the plays and comedies of the age, by the infamous deeds which they shamelessly represent, or the vices which they extol as grand and chivalrous virtues,—carry already in and of themselves their own hollowness into the heart of the spectator, enervating it, withdrawing it from the realities of life and duty, increasing the thirst for sensual things, awakening feelings of a suspicious, if not absolutely sinful sort. Scenery, costumes, music, splendid audience—all combine to enchant ; all are intended to enthrall the mind, obliterate the truth, and involve the spectator in an unreal rôle, of whose miserable termination, a guilty life and a hopeless death, only too often, give testimony.

As for the dance, it may be said even of the most innocent and harmless, what a spiritual writer says of mushrooms: The best of them are good for nothing. Heating of the imagination, fascination, desire of pleasing, curiosity, have often made balls and dancing-parties the hot-beds of dangerous acquaintances, the breeding-places of distraction, torpidity, incapacity for more serious and necessary things, until they have become real traps for innocence, and the occasions of most pitiable aberrations.

The more powerful the excitement of the senses and the fascination of the amusement, the less room for reflection and seriousness.

The more a man is occupied with outward things, the more active he is in the exterior senses, the duller he is in the interior, the deafer to the voice of duty, of conscience, of grace.

Longing after enjoyments weakens the heart, and kills in us that uprightness of feeling which directs us to virtue.

What is it, that made a wreck and ruin of Sodom, that drew down upon that beautiful city, the destroying rain of fire? Behold, this was the iniquity of Sodom,—pride, fulness of bread, and abundance,—idleness, and hardness of heart towards the poor.

O kingdom of heaven, which sufferest violence, and openest thyself only to the violent (Matt. 11 : 12), can I hope to reach thee by such flowery paths, and such softness of life?

It was, perhaps, pardonable to believe this, before the Son of God descended upon earth, and chose the painful way of the cross. But now, it is sheer folly, self-illusion, madness, and cowardice, to think so.

Our blessed Lord showed us where salvation for fallen humanity is to be found, where it may regain its lost estate, and how it attains its merit and its reward.

And the way is the same for young and old.

The young have the privilege of being first in the ranks of earth's weary pilgrims, first to begin the fight, to carry it on more courageously, as becomes their youthful vigor, their glowing heart, their spirit of chivalrous self-renunciation.

61.

INTEMPERANCE.

"*The kingdom of God is not meat and drink.*" (Rom. 14 : 17.)

Meat and drink preserve our corporal life. It is so ordained by God. But where the disorder begins, there begins the guilt.

Truly, the kingdom of God is not meat and drink ; and to rest in these, to seek happiness therein, is perverseness, abuse, denial of the true dignity of man.

The more exclusively man eats and drinks for the sake of enjoyment, the more flagrant is the abuse, and the greater the guilt.

If eating and drinking be indulged in to excess, if the health be thereby injured, the faculties of the soul diminished, much time lost, and the duties of one's state of life neglected,—then Intemperance is a sort of idolatry, whose sacrifices are real abominations to God.

Those who walk thus, are enemies of the cross of Christ ; their end is destruction ; their god is their belly ; and their glory is in their shame. (Phil. 3 : 8, 9.)

This inordinate indulgence in food and drink differs in its gradations, and finally, reaches the abyss of irrational brutes.

Inordinate desire, unbridled greed, fastidiousness about one's choice of meat and drink, low pleasure, surfeiting, loss of the free use of the senses, darkening of the understanding, servitude of the spirit by the overcharge of matter,

overwhelming of free-will—all these are the offspring of a passion, which becomes the more disgraceful, the more it degrades man to the level of the brute.

And yet, how many thoughtless young men are addicted to over-indulgence in drink !

Because there are many hard drinkers ; because there are many men of fashion who even glory in intemperance ; because the evil hides itself behind sociability and good cheer,—the young man enters upon this precipitous path, and, perhaps, even endeavors to gain a sad notoriety in it.

One would think it impossible for a well-educated young man to find pleasure in such a dissolute life ! But, alas, what are not bad example, the encouragement of others, one's evil inclination, and a falsely-understood standard of honor. able to accomplish !

In this way, many an excellent mind perishes, many a fine character is demoralized, many an innocent heart is wrecked, many a dangerous, bad, immoral connection is formed, many a dissipation is learned, the hard-earned money of industrious parents is squandered, devoured, and profaned, many a strong constitution is shattered, many a noble vocation frustrated, and the seed of incalculable misery sowed for the future to reap.

Truly, wine hath destroyed very many (Ecclus. 31: 30)—both of souls and bodies.

Above all, Intemperance inflames and stirs up the impure passions of men.

Wine is a luxurious thing, and drunkenness riotous ; whosoever is delighted therewith, shall not be wise. (Prov. 20 ; 1.)

Spirituous beverages heat the blood ; they are to the impure passion, what oil is to the flame.

The vapors which they generate, surround the mind with mist—they weigh, like heavy clouds, upon the heart.

The knowledge of good becomes confused ; the will is, as it were, enervated, blunted for every good purpose, incapable of every noble sentiment. The drunken man is completely controlled by his senses. Swayed by every beastly impulse, he indulges in his desires to the full, no matter how depraved or degraded they may be. What protection is there for chastity, when the watchman is asleep ? The doors stand open, and soldiers are bribed, or made defenseless.

Not in vain is the warning of the Apostle : Be not drunk with wine, wherein is luxury, but be ye filled with the Holy Spirit. (Ephes. 5 : 18.)

How, if death should overtake you at an hour when you have scarcely the semblance of a man ?

Take heed to yourselves, says Jesus Christ, lest perhaps your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and that day come upon you suddenly. (Luke 21 : 34.)

A young man addicted to this vice—what an abomination to heaven, what a horror to all honorable men ! What bad habits are there not in prospect ! What defeats ! What dishonors !

And who could reckon all the loss of time, the occasions of brawls and quarrels, the obscenities and shameless songs, the improprieties and rudeness, which follow in the train of drunken carousals !

Here, if ever, the greatest determination is necessary, provided a thorough cure is expected to take place.

Human respect is to be overcome ; the proximate occasions must be avoided ; abstinence, severity against one's self, are absolutely indispensable.

O shrink not back from these sacrifices, you who, until now, have indulged in this passion !

The more powerfully you attack it, the quicker you will obtain the victory.

Yes, use violence. Have pity upon your poor young heart! Do not yield it up to a vice which is hydra-headed—to a monster begetting other monsters, which will devour you cruelly at the very moment you throw yourself into its arms, and give yourself up to its embraces.

How does such an indulgence in drink accord with the thirst of your agonizing Redeemer, with the gall and vinegar of your Jesus, suffering and dying for you upon the cross?

How does it accord with the misery of so many needy fellow-creatures, with the sweat and death-agony of so many Christians, departing this life at that very hour?

How does it accord with the torments of those who, at this very moment, on account of this very sin, are being condemned to hell? with the groans of the rich glutton?—Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, to cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. (Luke 16: 20.)

Now, while the germ of evil is not yet fully developed, your task is not so difficult; but it will be heavy work, by and by, to cut down the tree, to tear up those roots which have penetrated deeply into the soil, and spread themselves in every direction.

Awake, ye that are drunk; and weep, and mourn, all ye that take delight in drinking sweet wine: for it is cut off from your mouth. (Joel 1: 5.)

62.

IMPURITY.

"Give me not over to a shameless and foolish heart"
(Ecclus. 23 : 6.)

If other vices are streams which sweep away millions on their waters, the vice of Impurity is a real deluge which engulfs almost everything in its remorseless torrent.

Old men, mature men, young men, are tossed in these filthy, stormy floods, some nearer to, and others farther from, the shore ; they rise and sink alternately, all making more or less efforts to escape, only to fall back again, and surrender themselves helplessly to destruction. Very few succeed in reaching the shore, while the great majority go down, and are lost for ever.

O bitter truth!—Man might be in honor, if he would assert his dignity, and keep himself undefiled ; but he prefers to equal himself to senseless beasts, and to become like to them. (Ps. 48 : 13.)

Yes, the profligate puts himself on a level with the brutes, which know no other law than their instinct. He who has reason and understanding, should bridle his unworthy and unholy desires.

O Lord, take from me the greediness of the belly : and let not the lusts of the flesh take hold of me : and give me not over to a shameless and foolish mind. (Ecclus. 23 : 6.)

Alas! our generation has become flesh (Gen. 6 : 3) ; it

has stripped off the higher, the spiritual. The flesh has made the soul tributary to itself ; memory, imagination, desires, thoughts, will,—they are all directed towards the flesh. But the flesh surrenders itself to carnal lusts ; it dishonors itself, it acts contrary to its destiny and God's holy purposes, forfeits its high prerogative of membership with the body of Jesus, and, in an especial manner, renders itself unworthy of a glorious resurrection.

O saddest of all aberrations, to which it is reserved to strive for two things at the same time : The destruction of everything spiritual and noble in the individual, and the annihilation of the whole human race !

No wonder, that the sin of impurity is an abomination in the sight of heaven and earth !

Truly—an abomination before God !

The heavenly Father destroys by fire from heaven five sinful cities, addicted to such vices ! Approach the Dead Sea, whose briny floods seem, even to-day, still occupied in eating away the foul deeds of an impure generation from the face of the earth. How could God do otherwise than hold in utmost detestation, a vice which so sadly disfigures his image, pushing the noblest work of his hands from the elevated rank which he had intended for it, down into an abyss of all rottenness and corruption ?

The Son of God, to whom every other insult was offered ; who allowed himself to be called a seducer of the people, a glutton, and a wine-bibber ; the friend of publicans and sinners,—never permitted his chastity to be called in question. If he, the purest of all, has espoused us through his Heart's blood—shall we be faithless enough to break this holy bond, and surrender our members, which have become his members (1. Cor. 6 : 15), to sins of impurity ?

The Holy Ghost who, in a special manner, is called a Spirit, holds this vice in utter detestation, because it, more

than any other sin, desecrates his temple (1. Cor. 6 : 19), and drives him out of his own dwelling. And why is the dove his emblem or figure, but because it flies from all uncleanness and filth?

The holy Angels, those pure spirits, shrink back with horror from a vice which makes them ashamed of their relationship to us earth-born mortals, and frustrates their guardian care over innumerable multitudes of souls.

The Saints of heaven hate impurity in the same degree in which they now enjoy, there above, the society of the all-pure God; or, as they, here below, either victoriously resisted this sin, or revenged it on themselves by frightful penances.

Even men, on their part, no matter how low they may have fallen, can only feel detestation for vices of this sort. Tell me, my young friend, if you knew of another that which you know of yourself,—if his secret shame and his unbridled passions were laid bare before you, would you not feel an unspeakable repugnance for him? Though he should possess every other virtue together with this one vice of impurity, you would refuse him your respect—he would be disgusting and offensive in your eyes

You yourself, unclean young man, are an abomination to yourself. Do you not loathe this filth of iniquity in which your soul is plunged? Do you not blush for this nameless weakness and cowardice? these constant relapses? this willing and not willing? this unspeakable slavery of habit? Does not your torn, wounded conscience torment you? Are you not terrified at the thought, at the awful prospect, of eternity?

And yet, innumerable young men are addicted to this abominable vice,—in thought, word, and deed; alone, and in company with other depraved characters.

They fall into this vice through imprudence, through rash curiosity, through want of watchfulness over their eyes,

ears, hands ; through the reading of bad books, through intercourse with bad people, through dangerous friendships, through idleness, through an effeminate life, through separation from God.

How many young men are there who, otherwise noble, and good, and almost faultless, would be the delight of heaven, the glory of the Church, the hope of the state and of the family, if this vice did not disfigure them !

Alas, the protecting hedge around this most precious portion of the vineyard of the Church, is broken down, and every passer-by ravages it. A vice, savage as the boar out of the wood, hath laid it waste : and a singular wild beast hath devoured it. (Ps. 79 : 14.)

Who will give water to my head, and a fountain of tears to my eyes ? and I will weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people. (Jer. 9 : 1.)

63.

THE RUIN CAUSED BY IMPURITY.

"*It is a fire that devoureth even to destruction, and footeth up all things that spring.*" (Job. 31 : 12.)

Awful and terrific are the devastations of the vice of impurity !

It is a fire that devoureth even to destruction, and rooteth up all things that spring. (Job 31 : 12.)

Even the health of the body suffers, especially, in the

young man who is given up to immoral practices. Impaired powers, poisoned blood, shattered body, destroyed development, premature old age, shortened life, are, not unfrequently, the terrible consequences of early corruption of morals.

If nothing is beautiful that is not pure, and if the purity of man is his chastity ; will lovely freshness, healthy bloom, genuine charms, and true nobility, adorn the impure young man ? And if holy purity is a sort of heavenly flower, whose fragrance fills the whole earthly house of the human body, why should not the opposite vice be a hateful, noxious plant, whose poisonous breath repulses, paralyzes, and destroys whatever comes near it ?

Sometimes, impurity disfigures at once, and imprints upon the whole exterior of the sinner, the stamp of a rude brutishness, or of a disgusting effeminacy.

Not unfrequently, the faculties of the soul are impaired ; the memory becomes dull, slothful, uncertain ; the power of comprehension decreases.

True wisdom withdraws itself from unclean persons. No,— Wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul, nor dwell in a body subject to sin. (Wisd. 1 : 4.)

And if there be question of heavenly wisdom—the knowledge of divine things,—should it be accessible to the impure ? Do not perverse, and how much more impure, thoughts separate from God ? (Wisd. 1 : 3.)

The character deteriorates. Whatever is beautiful and noble in it, gradually perishes. Inconstancy increases, low desires cover it with a luxuriant growth. How many (otherwise) excellent characters, by degrees, run to waste, under the unfluence of this terrible passion, and finally end in total depravity !

The will flags. It turns more and more away from good, and from whatever requires exertion · it becomes more and

more persevering in evil, to which it is naturally drawn with almost irresistible force.

The vice of impurity gradually robs the soul of the fear of God.

It undermines in it whatever good inclinations still remain.

It induces a distaste for virtue, causes a dislike, disgust, and hatred for holy and wholesome things.

Prayer becomes first unsatisfactory, then wearisome ; later on, it is omitted altogether, esteemed lightly, despised, and finally hated. The Sacraments are neglected or abused ; they have become either a source of torture, or an occasion of scorn and mockery. The word of God is unbearable ; a pious book, an abomination ; a visit to a church, unendurable.

The sensual man perceiveth not the things that are of the Spirit of God. (1. Cor. 2 : 14.)

Faith decreases, doubts arise. This religion which continually insists that every one should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor (1. Thess. 4 : 4), becomes an uncomfortable bondage. Indifference, coldness, mockery and scorn ; first interior, then open, rupture with the Church, follow in quick succession.

The inspirations of grace are not heeded ; they rebound from the brazen gates of the unchaste heart.

A greater and greater, constantly-increasing blindness settles upon the soul ; evil seems good, and good, evil, — bitter, sweet, and sweet, bitter.

Sin no longer inspires horror : They drink iniquity like water. (Job 15 : 16.) The already-weakened will, will soon become powerless ; the conscience is oppressed and enslaved.

The sensualist is deaf to every warning from without and within ; dizziness seizes the soul, madness and overbear-

ing have overpowered her. The luxurious man has heard it (a wise word), and it shall displease him, and he will cast it behind his back. (Ecclus. 21 : 18.)

The miserable wretch becomes harder and more obstinate. The deluge rises—vices of every sort are multiplied ; impurity leads to never-ceasing sin. (2. Pet. 2 : 14.) There is no longer any hope of amendment—all is moral shipwreck—total ruin.

Last of all, comes final impenitence,—that terrible portal of hell, beyond which, eternal punishment justly awaits the impure soul.

How many are there, alas ! whom death surprises in the midst of their vicious lives ! How many are taken without time for sincere and thorough repentance ! And how many of those who have been addicted to this monstrous vice from their early youth up, have any longer the least desire to be converted ! Who, despairing, have given themselves up to lasciviousness, to the working of all uncleanness. (Ephes. 4 : 19.)

The germs of hope and charity are destroyed—torn up by the roots. O fire, that devoureth even to destruction ! (Job 31 : 14.)

But these men, as irrational beasts, shall perish in their corruption, receiving the reward of injustice. (2. Pet. 2 : 13.)

Young man, you who have fallen into the clutches of so shameful and destructive a vice,—poor, pitiable young man, who are the victim of this soul-destroying passion—when will your wretchedness have an end ?

At mature manhood ? But will the chastity of your state of life adorn your maturity, when low debauchery has dishonored your youth ?

In old age ?—when the glow of youth is extinguished, and the chill of the grave already pervades your system ?

O, even then, sparks of concupiscence may be found smoldering in your degraded heart ! Besides, abstinence has no merit when the opportunity for gratification is wanting, and the powers of the body fail to answer to the will.

And are you really not afraid of death ? How, if it should surprise you in the midst of your sinful pleasures ? What a fearful departure ! Cut off suddenly, without shrift or penance ! O dreadful eternity !

And are you not afraid of the all-seeing eye of God ? It sees in the darkness of night, in the privacy of your chamber, in the depth of your seclusion. You imagine yourself alone ? Fool ! when and where would this be the case ? You are never alone. Behold, in the very moment of sinning, that eye of Infinite Holiness blazes upon you.—Tremble ! lest its lightning pierce and destroy you !

O whited sepulchres, beware ! Outwardly, fine, honorable, well-disguised ; but within (you are), full of dead men's bones and all filthiness. (Matt. 23 : 27.)

One eye penetrates the polished marble, and the most secret impulses of this shameful passion. O judgment-day ! What abominations wilt thou not reveal ! What illusions wilt thou not correct ! What ramifications of vice wilt thou not lay open !

My poor son, when will you return ? Ah ! not to-day ? Will it be easier for you to-morrow ? Will it be easier after weeks, months, years ? The stone falls, and gains fresh impetus in falling : the stream of bad habits swells, and its current becomes more and more rapid.

Are you happy ? How could you be happy ? Nothing here below, satisfies us, because it is not God—how much less, then, can that satisfy us which is the very opposite of God ?

How do you feel after those moments—those orgies of sensual intoxication ?

O how empty, how exhausted, how languid ! And what of the sting that is left deep in the heart ? Ah ! misery ! you sob forth ; and you have good reason for grief.

Poor young man, what recollections shall, one day, torture your soul ! Stretched upon the bed of death, you shall see pass before your spiritual eye those youthful years which you now so shamefully desecrate ; you shall behold this or that deed, shudder at the enormity and number of those impure actions, which, perhaps, you are now planning.

You shall know, then, that you could, if you would, and that you could, because you should, have avoided them. And this flesh !—ah, this sinful flesh,—it is almost decayed before your departure from earth ! Tortured, bruised, withered, dead, it lies there, fit for nothing but to suffer !

Where is pleasure now ? What remains of it ? Perhaps, it has eved hastened your death.

My dear young man, be wise in time. Avoid a vice which brands your youth with infamy ; which poisons your best days, and which, anticipating the future, nips the bud of its precious and beautiful fruits.

Of all your past pleasures of the flesh, nothing remains but the bitter remembrance of having enjoyed them !

64.

THE SPIRIT OF INDEPENDENCE.

" *He that rejecteth instruction, despiseth his own soul.*"
(Prov. 15 : 32.)

Liberty is the capability of determining for one's self. This self-determination, however, must have good for its

end. The more perfect it is, the less it is capable of deviating from what is right and good.

So-called social liberty consists in an unquestioned exercise of individual rights. A false liberty is synonymous with the rejection of all authority, no matter how well-founded.

God. our supreme Lord and Maker, is the Ruler of the universe as well as of individual men ; he has rights over us which, for the general and particular good of his creatures, he can depute, and has deputed, to civil and religious authorities.

Gradations in age, of themselves, presuppose subordination to seniority. As every successive generation treads in the footprints of its predecessor, it must be led, instructed, trained, and reared by older and wiser hands. This makes dependence, docility, obedience, and submission, necessary

Different conditions, unequal distribution of worldly goods, social position, skill, mental superiority, the influence which exterior power united to moral strength, exercises upon those who live near, or with, one another,—are all fresh sources of mutual subordination—sources, which have their origin in the nature of man, and his gradual development ; which proceed from the formation of a society consisting of many persons.

To claim a liberty, which would be tantamount to a release from every mutual duty, is little better than folly and madness.

Parent and child, prince and subject, superior and inferior, rich and poor, powerful and weak,—stand in mutual relation to each other,—have rights and duties which are ordained by God, and founded in nature.

This mutual external subordination, such as age, condition, social position, influence of mind, and of external goods,

draw after them, carries, also, with it, an interior subordination : a submission, a compliance of the will with everything that is morally right.

Set aside this subordination ; sunder these bonds of rational dependence and rightful obedience—and men will roam the earth like wild beasts. Individuals, tribes, races, and nations will annihilate each other ; all natural laws will be inverted, and the rational creation will present a spectacle such as is nowhere met with in the irrational, where dependence, order, co-operation, and mutual relief form the foundation of a common existence.

The observance of this interior subordination as a duty, (founded in the nature of man and in the existence of human society), God has intrusted to our moral liberty. It is, consequently, an abuse thereof, when an exterior liberty is sought, which is neither in the plan of Providence, nor compatible with our position, as men and members of society.

Revel, then, young man, in imagination, in a liberty impossible in itself, and unblessed by God ; but, know, at the same time, that you become the more enslaved, the farther you withdraw yourself from a reasonable subordination.

He that rejecteth instruction, despiseth his own soul (Prov. 15 : 32) ; he rivets her chains, and delivers her up to the most degrading slavery ; for, in as much as he will not be subject to every human creature for God's sake (1. Pet. 2 : 13), he is betrayed into the fetters of sin and Satan, and prepares for himself a never-to-be-opened prison in hell. Let those fools who rave about liberty, go on. They may subvert the established order of things for a while, but they can do nothing against him who rules even kings with a rod of iron, (Ps. 2 : 13) ; and who, when he will, shall crush the heads in the land of the many. (Ps. 109 : 6.)

Poor, deluded young man, who are lured to destruction

by that sweet word, Liberty ! It incites you to rebellion against parents and teachers ; authority is despised ; you are taught to set yourself up in judgment upon everybody and everything ; you are misled by high-sounding phrases of human greatness and self-importance ! What will be the outcome of all this ? You shall fall under the rod of far more exacting task-masters,—bad men and unruly passions,—who will bind you in fetters, and domineer over you, as though you were mere dead, willless machines.

And if, under the false pretense of Liberty and Fraternity, you should be so unfortunate as to join those secret societies, whose real objects are carefully concealed, and which have long since fallen under the censure and curse of the Church—ah ! then, you will have to drain the cup of so-called Liberty to its bloody dregs, and the terrible Forward ! will become your tyrant without mercy and pity. Facts speak louder than words ; therefore, if any man have ears to hear, let him hear. (Mark. 4 : 23.)

Not he whom men make free, or pretend to make free, is free ; but he whom the Son of God shall make free, shall be free indeed. (John 8 : 36.) But the Son of God makes us free through his holy word, through his example, through his grace, breaking the shackles of sin, of Satan, and of the passions.

This spirit of the times,—the spirit of independence and misunderstood self-dependence,—you must drive from you with all your might. You must do battle against it, wherever and in whomsoever you find it—in the school, in the family, in the community, in Church, and state. It is inimical to your peace and repose, and to that of every one else. It aims at confusion and disorder ; and at the ruin, alike, of the individual and of the whole human family

At some future time, through age, position, or experience, you may be called upon to exercise authority over others.

Will you not then desire respect and obedience from your subordinates ?

Most assuredly ; it cannot be otherwise. Hence, learn now to be subject, to practise obedience, if, in the future, you would be fit, as a superior, to command and control others.

Selfish preachers of a liberty which is all license ! They require of others what they themselves will not perform. Are they, alone, to enjoy liberty and equality ?

O holy and glorious liberty of the children of God ! (Rom. 8 : 21.) Wide as the heavens, is the difference between thee and that miscalled liberty which the world extols to the skies.

O holy liberty of the children of God, elevated above chains, and dungeons, and every mark and sign of physical slavery !

O holy liberty of the children of God, which consists in the infallible prerogative of being good, and of being able to do good, at least in heart and will !

O holy liberty of the children of God, which springs from order, and whose result is the peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding ! (Phil. 4 : 7.)

O holy liberty of the children of God, which recognizes God himself in all rightly-constituted authority ! To obey such, is surely no disgrace, since to serve God is to reign.

O holy liberty of the children of God, which elevates the innocent youth far above the vicious, worldly-wise man, making up to him in heavenly wisdom, what is lacking in years of experience !

O holy liberty of the children of God, which rules every where ; for, where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty ! (2. Cor. 3 : 17.)

Truly, we have been called unto liberty : but we use not

liberty for an occasion of the flesh ; but, by charity of the Spirit, serve one another. (Gal. 5 : 13.)

65.

THE SPIRIT OF UNTRUTH.

"*The mouth that belieth, killeth the soul.*" (Wisd. 1. 11.)

Thou, O Lord, hast created my spirit for truth. Truth, alone, satisfies it ; it is a necessity to it ; it is its life.

Buy truth ; and do not sell wisdom, and instruction, and understanding. (Prov. 23 : 23.)

Prize truth, and try to acquire it in every way. Accept only the truth ; believe only the truth. In all your researches, strive only after truth ; judge only after the perception of things,—this is true wisdom. To act otherwise, is to deceive and to belie one's self.

Offer, also, to others, nothing but the truth. He who lies, sells wisdom, surrenders it, sets little value upon it.

Young man, are you not the image of God, who is truth itself? I am the truth. (John 14 : 6.) This likeness is your most distinguished ornament ; do not disfigure it by falsehood. Though untruth should clothe you, as with the most splendid garment, it does not become you, it disgraces you, it disfigures you.

There is an untruth of the heart, an untruth of the mouth, and an untruth of action. Thoughts, words, and deeds may proceed from untruth, and rest upon untruth. The

most widely-spread form of untruth, is the lie of the mouth.

Nearly all lies spring from self-love.

You desire to please and to be agreeable? You flatter, you speak of, and to, your neighbor otherwise than you think in your heart. You exaggerate and embellish your utterances at the expense of truth.

You wish to be respected? You attribute to yourself imaginary qualities, and make them pass current with others.

You wish to conceal your fault, and escape a humiliation? You misrepresent the fact, and seek an escape by untruth.

You wish to gain an advantage over your neighbor? You do not do justice to his good qualities; you magnify his faults, while at the same time, you exalt yourself, justify yourself, at the expense of truth.

There are those who hold lying to be the most pardonable of all faults;—and are there not even such as reckon lying among the necessities of this life? They call it policy, prudence, circumspection, the unavoidable.

But what does the just man, the truly conscientious man, think of it?

The just shall hate every lying word. (Prov. 13. 5.) The upright man knows that the mouth that belieth, killeth the soul. (Wisd. 1: 11.) And in the strength of this conviction, he is not misled by the lying spirit of the age.

No doubt, the kingdom of untruth is very extensive. Falsehood abounds on all sides of us; and truth is outweighed by gold. The infant in the cradle begins to lie; the boy at school continues the evil practice; the young man among his companions, the adult in his avocation, the servant, the mechanic, the merchant, the high and the low,—all verify the complaint of the prophet: There is no truth in the land. (Osee 4: 1.) Truth has been forgotten. (Is. 59: 15.) If

our generation has any advantage over that which preceded it, it is that politeness of manners, the varnish of culture, have made it easier to conceal our falsehoods.

While untruth floods the world, like a mighty deluge—while it is constantly upheld and justified by a perverse people,—what does the Lord think of it, he whose truth remaineth for ever? (Ps. 116 : 2.) My mouth shall meditate truth ; and my lips shall hate wickedness. All my words are just : there is nothing wicked nor perverse in them. I hate . . . every wicked way, and a mouth with a double tongue. (Prov. 8 : 7, 8, 13.)

The Lord has only one balance ; and false weights are unknown to him. A deceitful balance is an abomination before the Lord : and a just weight is his will. (Prov. 11 : 1.)

Herein, the man of honor truly resembles God. As he thinks, so he speaks. His speech is : Yea, yea, no, no. He knows that whatsoever is more than these, cometh from evil. (Matt. 5 : 57.)

It is true, he does not always say the whole truth, because he knows that silence at the right time is prudence ; but he says exactly what he means and thinks, and his intention is pure.

If he be obliged to suffer for truth's sake, he rejoices and is glad ; he bears it, and continues to hope. He knows that truth, like the all-pervading sunbeam, will force its way, at last, through the darkness ; and, if not sooner, at least, on the great Day of general reckoning, will throw its light upon the most obscure mysteries.

And, suppose that truth should demand sacrifices,—are they not the noblest and most meritorious? Could we suffer for a better cause? On the contrary, to gain an advantage through untruth, is injury, disadvantage, loss, and disgrace

Do you know who is the father of lies? (John 8 : 44.)

Listen : You shall not die . . . You shall be as gods (Gen. 3 : 4, 5), said Satan to our mother Eve. All these, will I give thee, if, falling down, thou wilt adore me, he said to Jesus Christ. (Matt. 4 : 9.)

Lies, and always lies ! Satan deludes those whom he tempts to evil.

Yes, Lucifer carried with him to the depths of hell at least one resolution,—that of deceiving and lying, of robbing God of his glory, and of misleading man from his true aim. Satan is the direct opposite of God in all things. God is truth, Satan is untruth ; when he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own : for he is a liar, and the father thereof. (John 8 : 44.

What relationship arises from falsehood ? A partnership with Satan in his perverseness, in his rage of destruction and ruin !

There are liars through surprise.

There are liars through loquacity.

There are liars through habit.

There are liars through malice.

There are professional liars.

If the first be excusable, and by their volatility are not so much to the damage, as to the dishonor of mankind, the latter classes are members of that great family of liars, whose head and father is the devil himself, and are really deserving of the contempt and execration of the whole world.

Yes, lying is an abomination before God, and an odious thing to all men of truth and honor. Lying is contrary to the object for which the gift of speech was bestowed upon man ; it aims at the destruction of human society, by shaking mutual confidence.

Untruth, also, corrupts the character, and has manifold disorders in its train. Must not the habit of lying gradually lead to double-dealing, to cunning, craft, dissimulation, and

hypocrisy? to infidelity and violation or disregard of lawful promises? to sinful asseverations, cursing, and perjury? Does it not make one suspicious of others, by ascribing to them the bad habit of lying and double-dealing of which he knows himself to be guilty?

How very few of our young men really hold truth dear! From habitual, almost unnoticed, exaggeration, from a foolish lie and a false excuse to an injurious lie and rash imprecations—what a series of sins against truth!

Reserve in speaking, watchfulness over one's self, a manly, oft-repeated resolution of remaining faithful to truth at all times and in all places—are the most effectual means of curing a lying tongue.

Yes, young man, fly lying. (Exod. 23 : 7.)

Give your mind no oblique, perverse direction. Force not your spirit to that unnatural practice of falsehood, from which it shrinks back in horror.

Often pray: Remove far from me vanity and lying words. (Prov 30 : 8.) Behold, thou hast loved truth. (Ps. 50 : 8.) Thou lovest truth, thou hast commanded justice, thy testimonies and thy truth exceedingly. (Ps. 118 : 138.) O, that I might always be careful enough, and have courage enough, never again to depart from the chosen way of truth! (Ps. 118 : 30.)

66.

THE SPIRIT OF UNCHARITABLENESS.

"*Make doors and bars to thy mouth.*" (Ecclus. 28 : 28.)

Sometimes, a want of charity proceeds from a naturally stern and severe disposition. But, more commonly, it has its root in pride and inordinate self-esteem.

Superiority of knowledge, ability, wealth, noble birth, the habit of hearing praise and flattery, soon become sources of a fault into which a young man is easily betrayed ; and which affects all those unavoidable relations with his inferiors, his equals, or his superiors, inseparable from his condition in life.

Those who are employed in literary work, will find themselves, by their very occupation, especially prone to this spirit of uncharitableness.

The desire of knowing more than others, the wish to excel others, an overbearing self-sufficiency, jealousy, envy, secret dislike of those whose efforts are blessed with success,—put the student or scientist in ill humor ; they make his heart narrow and hard, rob his eye of its native simplicity, his tongue of its friendliness, his hand of the ready grasp of fraternal devotion.

Another source of this vice is the spirit of the time itself. Arrogance and self-conceit fostered and indulged in from earliest youth, cannot help but bear their fruits : Rash judgment, a spirit of contradiction, obstinacy, bitterness, vehemence, passionate rebellion. Equals and superiors, without any jurisdiction, are called before the bar of reason, (or unreason) ; they are judged and condemned ; one becomes the judge, nay, even the despiser, of his neighbor, in the same degree in which he claims that his reason is superior to that of all others. And every time he gives sentence against his brother, his self-esteem and self-confidence increase.

Suspicion, rash judgment, back-biting, calumny, detraction, bitterness, mockery, insult, implacability, hatred,— poison tongue, mind, and heart.

We overlook the fact that our neighbor stands in a higher relation to us, and represents the person of Christ.

And what becomes of the commandment of God,—to love our neighbor as ourselves ? (Mark 12 : 31.)

At least, make a balance for thy words, and a just bridle for thy mouth : and take heed, lest thou slip with thy tongue. (Ecclus. 28 : 29 : 30.) Make doors and bars for thy mouth. (Ecclus. 28 : 28.)

O door most difficult to guard ! I cannot help but open it sometimes, and then, alas ! how easily do wrong words slip out, together with good ones !

Truly, if any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man. (James 3 : 2.) Necessity, advantage, and propriety often demand of me to speak—how watchful must I then be, to open this door at the proper time, and to shut it in right season !

If the God-fearing guardians,—wisdom and charity,—do not keep watch, disorder will arise, and that which should not, will find exit ; the honor of the neighbor will be assailed, discord will be sown, offense will be given, desires of revenge will be awakened, inflamed, and put into action !

O my God, how little do I endeavor to practise the godly advice of Tobias : See thou never do to another what thou wouldst hate to have done to thee by another. (Tob. 4 : 16.)

How carelessly and rashly do I often judge my fellow-man !

How unsparingly do I speak of him ! He is almost the only subject of my conversation. I fall unmercifully upon him, drag forth his bad qualities to the light of day, while I place his good ones in shadow. The good is lessened, the bad, magnified. Evil motives are ascribed to him, good ones distorted. What is really bad is spread far and near ; imaginary bad is invented.

And yet—the detractor is the abomination of men. (Prov. 24 : 9.)

If a serpent bite in silence, he is nothing better that backbiteth secretly. (Eccles. 10 : 1.)

And, O my God ! how difficult is it to make good the injury inflicted by an evil tongue !

O, the sons of men, whose teeth are weapons and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword ! (Ps. 56 : 5.)

O Lord, thou alone knowest how incurable are the wounds inflicted by this venomous weapon !

Therefore, set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth ; and a door round about my lips. Incline not my heart to evil words. (Ps. 149 : 3, 4.)

Hedge in thy ears with thorns : hear not a wicked tongue. (Ecclus. 28 : 28.)

O, give me strength to keep a strict guard over my uncharitable tongue, that as the north wind driveth away rain (Prov. 25 : 23), so, the sweet charity of Christ may silence the voice of detraction.

If even a cup of cold water given to a fellow-creature in thy name (Matt. 10 : 42) shall be so richly rewarded by thee, O Lord : what may I not expect from thy bounty, as a return for my efforts in saving my neighbor's honor, or in doing him good either in soul or body !

67

SCANDAL.

"*For lo, the wicked have bent their bow ; they have prepared their arrows in the quiver: to shoot in the dark the upright of heart.*" (Ps. 10 : 3.)

Some there are who, not satisfied with being wicked themselves, needs must draw others into their wickedness.

It is the nature of vice to seek for companions ; and in this, the depraved resemble wild beasts ; becoming blood-thirsty, they seek for prey. And the young cub-lion went up and down among the lions, and became a lion : and he learned to catch the prey, and to devour men. He learned to make widows. (Ezech. 19 : 6, 7.)

This deliberate communication of vice, on the part of the wicked, is called Scandal.

The more explicit and conscious the intention to injure the soul of another, the more diabolical, the scandal.

To give scandal, in short, is to speak, to act, in such a manner, as to lead others away from virtue, or to induce them to commit sin.

To give scandal, therefore, means to seduce ; it means to make the good bad, and the bad still worse.

To what has God a better-founded right than to the soul of man ? He is her Creator, her Preserver, her Saviour, her Sanctifier. The soul is God's property.

Upon her, he has stamped his image ; Jesus has re-

deemed her with his precious blood. In Baptism, the Holy Ghost has consecrated her as his temple.

To give scandal means to murder this soul, to rob her of her life of grace, to thrust her into hell.

To kill a soul! What is everything earthly—what, the whole world with all its glory and treasures, compared with one soul?

To kill a soul! To rob her of all her hitherto-acquired merits, to render her sterile in good, to deprive her of peace; to deliver her over to everlasting torments,—the portion of the impenitent in that moment of death, which shall come as a thief in the night. (Apoc. 16 : 15.)

This murder is an assassination, because, generally, the murderer of souls acts treacherously, lurks around a long time, plans everything beforehand; perhaps, even approaches in sheep's clothing. For lo, the wicked have bent their bow; they have prepared their arrows in the quiver: to shoot in the dark, the upright of heart. (Ps. 16 : 3.)

This murder seldom stops with one victim. Generally, the seduced become seducers, and the corruption is thus propagated. The murderous weapon passes from hand to hand; corpse is heaped upon corpse, and the whole earth becomes a grave of sin.

Their slain shall be cast forth, and out of their carcasses shall rise a stink: the mountain shall be melted with their blood. (Is. 34 : 2,)

Woe to the murderers! Woe to that man by whom the scandal cometh! It were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. (Matt. 18 : 6, 7.)

To give scandal, therefore, is the work of the devil: for he is a murderer from the beginning. (John 8 : 44.)

What a dreadful responsibility! To destroy God's creation! To render void the work of redemption! To

hinder the Holy Ghost in his operations of grace ! To deliver a soul to damnation ! To murder a brother !

How, a man hunts his brother to death ? (Mich. 7 : 2.)

The voice of thy brother's blood crieth to me from the earth ! (Gen. 4 : 10.)

And how about the blood of Jesus ? Now, when you sin thus against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died ? (1. Cor. 8 : 11, 12.)

What an awful responsibility ! As if I had not enough grievous sins to atone for, nor enough spiritual wounds and maladies to cure,—I must steep my hand in the blood of another, and must even commit sin through the agency of another !

And on the bed of death—what awful remembrances !

And at the judgment-seat ! I will require his blood at thy hand. (Ezech. 3 : 18.)

And in hell—wolf and lamb, the seducer and the seduced ! Woe to thee that spoilest, shalt not thou thyself also be spoiled ? (Is. 33 : 1.)

Woe to them ; for they have gone in the way of Cain. (Jude 11.)

Go ye after him through the city, and strike ; let not your eye spare, nor be ye moved with pity . . . Therefore, neither shall my eye spare, nor will I have pity : I will requite their way upon their head. (Ezech. 9 : 5, 10.)

Ah, how difficult it is to repair a scandal ! The poison has penetrated to the most minute veins : who shall find it, and remove it from the system ?

And yet ?—a soul for a soul !

O, pray—pray fervently, that God may pardon you, that he may restore to life the soul that you have murdered !

Pray ; and let all your efforts, henceforth, be directed to repairing the scandal you have given. Save souls ; en-

deavor to lead the erring to the path of virtue, both by word and example. Labor for the dissemination of virtue ; be an apostle of heaven ; seek to people the city of God.

Beware of being the cause of evil in any shape or form !

There is more than enough of evil already in our sin-laden world. Do not increase it. There are plenty of those who err from their destiny, who miss their final end : do not augment the number of these wretches, and do not rush yourself into double ruin. Say rather : I will teach the unjust thy ways ; and the wicked shall be converted to thee. (Ps. 50 : 15.)

Young man,—to pass through life with the consciousness of having murdered a soul through youthful passion ; to have taught her evil by giving her over to impurity, or by estranging her from religion ; to have deprived mankind, the family, the state, the Church, of a useful member,—what a bitter reflection ! What a gnawing remorse ! Save yourself from it.

In the meantime, be you, also, on your guard against the wolves.

If faith and morals be dear to you, be prudent and circumspect.

Irreligious utterances, obscene discourses, bold deportment, importunity, impudence, cunning flattery, sensual confidingness, double-meaning words, and an endeavor to separate you from the crowd,—betray the wolf. Avoid him, fly from him ! If you cannot do this, seek aid, call the shepherd ; put yourself in the attitude of defense.

If the wolf shall at any time have fellowship with the lamb, so the sinner with the just. What fellowship hath a holy man with a dog ? (Ecclus. 13 : 21, 22.)

68.

THE ABUSE OF THE HOLY SACRAMENTS.

"*Therefore, are there many infirm and weak among you, and many sleep.*" (1. Cor. 11 : 30.)

It is one thing not to derive from the holy Sacraments all the profit which can be drawn from them, and quite a different thing to abuse, profane, or outrage them.

The holy Sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist are, from their very nature, sources of unspeakable blessing. But, according as a person approaches these fountains with a large or small vessel, he will draw much or little grace ; according as he uses circumspection to preserve the acquired contents, will he enjoy what he has drawn, for a longer or shorter space of time.

It is true, the length of time spent in preparation for the reception of the Sacraments is no criterion for the benefit to be deprived therefrom. The latter chiefly depends on the mind, the desire, the interior solidity. Nevertheless, the sanctity of the matter, the importance of the business, demand that we be free from unbecoming haste.

Hurry and superficiality are much to be deplored and condemned in connection with such holy actions. In such cases, the heart is not softened ; the dew of divine grace cannot penetrate it ; the fertilizing moisture cannot spread itself abroad. How, then, can an increase of grace be expected ?

Here, above all things, is the saying applicable : What-

ever you do, do it with all your might. Perform it assiduously, with great care, and prosecute it in earnest to the desired end.

Scanty thanksgiving, and a want of fervor after the reception of the Sacraments, are also very injurious. At that time, especially, should we avoid throwing ourselves into the hurry and distractions of every-day life.

Alas ! even at the best, the warmth of our devotion is only too quickly evaporated. How, then, will it be, if you fling open all the doors and windows of your soul, and suffer the rude air of the outside world to have free passage therein ? Your devotion will vanish in a moment, and the invading chill will be all the more perceptible, will produce all the more injurious and fatal effects, because of the sudden transition from heat to cold.

O, if we did but know the gift of God ! (John 4 : 10.) If we were but thoroughly penetrated with the greatness of the favor conferred upon us in the most holy Sacrament of the Altar ! O, if we only understood the value of the divine gift, or the influence which a worthy reception of the Sacraments exercises on our spiritual progress, our eternal interests !

Unfortunately, we are wanting in reverence, in love, in fervor.

The fire does not warm, the light does not enlighten, the medicine does not cure, the superabundance does not enrich, and even the divine power does not strengthen.

The bread of earth, rough and fleshly as it is, produces more effect upon our body, than this heavenly bread upon our soul. Fed with this lifeless bread, our body grows strong and supple, it defies sickness and death ; but we eat the Living Bread, which came down from heaven,—our Saviour, Christ the Lord,—with all the fulness of his divinity, with all the merits and treasures of his humanity—and our

soul remains blind, lame, numb, inactive,—our will earthly, divided, cowardly, impotent!

My son, how many times have you already been at confession and holy Communion?

Is your heart any purer? your zeal any more active? your will any stronger? your amendment more lasting?

Is your progress in holiness in proportion to the number of your past confessions and Communions?

See to it, lest your levity despoil even these overflowing fountains of their virtue for you.

Superficial examination of conscience, superficial contrition, superficial accusation; careless thanksgiving and performance of penance; little recollection between confession and Communion; haste before Communion, distractions at the time of Communion, hurry after Communion,—no sign of recollection on the day of Communion! O my son, what will become of your soul, if you do not take time and pains to receive this spiritual food worthily, to eat it becomingly, and to profit by it?

What shall I say of the unworthy reception of this most holy Sacrament? This is the chief cause why there are so many infirm and weak among us, and many sleep the sleep of death. (1. Cor. 11 : 30.)

And is this sacrilege so rare among young men?

Behold, how many perform their duty only from compulsion, or through mere custom! No reverence, no love, no interior impulse—and therefore, no solicitude, no fervor, no devotion.

Carelessness gradually becomes indifference, abuse—yes, even contempt and real malice against God and divine things.

He who dares to approach the table of the Lord with a mortal sin unconfessed and unrepented of, upon his soul, outrages our divine Saviour, since he treats his most ador-

able Flesh and Blood like common food, and draws down upon himself the judgment of God, not discerning the body of the Lord. (1. Cor. 11 : 29.)

Through culpable carelessness, you have omitted a mortal sin in confession ? You have purposely, through false shame or malice, concealed a mortal sin in confession ? If in this state of spiritual death, you approach the altar, you are doubly dead !

The most holy Sacrament is a Sacrament of the living. It is food ; and food can never nourish a corpse.

What a horrible outrage—an unworthy Communion ! To compel the Holy of Holies to enter into a heart filled with all uncleanness !

If a direct blasphemy, considered in and for itself, is the greatest of all sins ; and, if the sin of the Jews in crucifying Jesus, is only second in the order of great crimes ; next in rank comes the unworthy Communion, which maltreats and profanes the hidden God.

God wills all holy things to be treated holily, even sacred vestments, sacred vessels, and buildings dedicated to holy uses. And he himself says : Give not that which is holy, to the dogs. (Matt. 7 : 6.)

But what is holier than this holy Sacrament, which is the end and sum of all other Sacraments ?

What is holier than the Body and Blood of Jesus, the All-holy One, who now reigns gloriously in heaven, the future Judge of the living and the dead ? And what concord hath Christ with Belial ? (2. Cor. 6 : 15.)

Treachery and hypocrisy are added to sacrilege. The mask of friendship is assumed ; one approaches our Lord, like Judas. Malice is concealed under the cloak of piety ; defiance under the guise of pretended reverence ; and violence under a friendly demeanor.

Thus, this most loving Saviour receives the blackest in-

gratitude in return for his generous kindness. O my people, what have I done to thee ?—Answer thou me ! (Mich. 6 : 3.) I have planted thee a chosen vineyard, all true seed : how, then, art thou turned unto me into that which is good for nothing, O strange vineyard ! (Jer. 2 : 21.) Thou preferrest Barabbas to me, and thou crucifiest me, thy Saviour !

O sacrilegious deed ! To his other sins, the unworthy communicant adds a new and far more terrible one. Man outrages his Lord, the creature the Creator, the redeemed his Redeemer ! Medicine is changed into poison, blessing into a curse, the blood of redemption into the blood of vengeance ! The sacrilegious wretch eats his Judge, together with his judgment : He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself. (1. Cor. 11 : 29.)

What wonder that the Lord withdraws himself from such a wretch ! Not only has he outraged grace, but the Author of grace and life, (Acts 3 : 15)—profaning and trampling his blood under his feet !

And the heart of such a sinner, as a consequence of his sin, becomes daily more and more indifferent, harder and colder towards all things divine.

When such a monstrous crime has been once committed, what is there to hinder its repetition ?

Spiritual blindness grows, obstinate impenitence increases. Behold the stillness of death within—hypocrisy without—the soul poisoned—men deceived—God betrayed !

Nor, does the evil end in spiritual sickness, spiritual weakness, multiplied spiritual death. Not unfrequently, the unworthy communion is followed by corporal woes,—sudden and unprovided death, the eternal ruin of the body, as well as of the soul.

Can it be possible that, at your early age, you have al-

ready committed so horrible a crime? If so, young man, what prospect is there for the future!

Will you harden yourself against all that is good, noble, and sublime, through having begun your career with the very worst of crimes?

O, if the love of your Saviour has altogether vanished from your heart; if it be so estranged from him that you are able to betray him deliberately and in cold blood,—of what will you not be capable?

Judas, dost thou betray the Son of man with a kiss? (Luke 22 : 48.) Your Saviour has not deserved this at your hands.

If you will not take the trouble of preparing a pure dwelling for the Most Holy in your heart, then, better were it that you should not invite him to it.

Be honest; do not say: Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof (Matt. 8 : 8); say rather: I do not wish to make myself worthy! For, although your coldness may wound your Saviour deeply, your presumption will not profane the Holy of Holies.

O most patient Jesus! how dear to thy loving Heart must not thine elect be, when, for their sake, thou didst institute a Sacrament, in which wicked men possess so rich an opportunity of basely mocking and insulting thee, and of most cruelly outraging thee!

69.

HUMAN RESPECT.

"*For, whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed.*" (Luke 9 : 26.)

There is only one thing of which a man ought to be ashamed : of evil ;—to do evil, or to have done it.

But, miserably enough, he is often ashamed of the very opposite : of avoiding evil and doing good.

The thought of being ridiculed, blamed, or despised by others, disquiets him ; he becomes confused and alarmed ; he acts contrary to his better conviction. The inspiration to good is slighted, the favorable opportunity passes—he is overcome,—conscience, virtue, God, are surrendered !

Young people yield easier than others to this false shame, this foolish fear,—because their imaginations are so lively, their minds so susceptible of all impressions.

How many conversions from evil to good, and from good to better, does not this human respect prevent ! How much evil does it not cause, how much good does it not frustrate !

What will they think of me ? What will they say to it ? They will laugh at me, ridicule me. How can I separate myself from this, or from that ? How can I give up this one or that one ? They will think hard of me; it will look odd and singular !

The whole world is full of such cowards ; and often those who boast most of their independence, are the most pitiful slaves of this mean passion.

Honor—much-abused word! Does honor consist in cowardly compliance, in a more-than-untimely readiness to please? in sacrificing conscience? in surrendering our highest and best convictions?

Has he honor who lies down in cringing servitude,—the bond-slave of a word, a jest, a look, a reproach?

Coward!—for such you are, and as such you are regarded even by those to whom you yield;—coward, why do you suffer yourself to be thus enslaved?

Are those whom you so much fear, your legitimate lords and masters?

God alone is, by right, your Lord and Master. From him, you have your being; he can take it away from you at his pleasure, whenever he wills,—and not they. He shall, one day, judge you. His good pleasure must be of more value to you than all the displeasure of men. God's displeasure cannot be outweighed by all the good pleasure of men.

Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will show you whom you shall fear: fear ye him who, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell, I say to you, fear him. (Luke. 12: 4, 5.)

Alas! what an insult do you offer to God by preferring man before him! Are you, then, ashamed of God?

What is more honorable than to serve God? to do his holy will? Is he not the King of heaven and earth? Is he not the best, the highest, the loveliest, and the most beautiful?

How, if God should, one day, be ashamed of you? If, on the terrible judgment-day, he let you perish in your nothingness? If, then, he should deny you, as you deny him now, if he should refuse to know you? What then?

Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come

in his majesty (Luke 9 : 26), says the Lord :—and he will keep his word.

Tell me, at least, before whom are you ashamed ?

Before the good and virtuous ? Before those who will, one day, come with the Saints of heaven to sit in judgment over the world ?

Is it not rather before sinners, evil-doers, perverts, and fools ? Yes, indeed—fools. The Sacred Scripture says : Fools hate them that flee from evil things. (Prov. 13 : 19.) Yes, indeed—sinners. The worship of God is an abomination to a sinner. (Ecclus. 1 : 32.) And again : He that walketh in the right, and feareth God, is despised by him that goeth by an infamous way. (Prov. 14 : 2.)

Are you so sensitive as to the recognition or respect of men ? Why, then, do you not labor for the esteem and praise of the just and good ?

Why all these cowardly fears ? Is virtue, then, something disgraceful ? What has any worth, if not it, and it alone ?

Riches vanish, honors evaporate, pleasures slip away :—virtue, valuable in itself, recognised by God, fostered by the noblest and best of men,—an object of envy, even to the wicked,—virtue remains, reaches even beyond the grave—crowns, and is crowned,—reigns in, and for, all eternity ! They that instruct many to justice, shall shine as stars for all eternity. (Dan. 12 : 2.)

Can it be possible that you are ashamed of your nature, of your existence, of your destiny ?—Unheard-of folly !—Is the bird ashamed of flying, the fish of swimming ? And is not the service of God your nature, your element, your end and aim ? Fear God, and keep his commandments : for this is all the man. (Eccles. 12 : 13.)

You are afraid of being thought singular, odd, queer, peculiar ?

But, are you not aware that, as a virtuous man, you will always be singular, odd, queer, peculiar in a world of sinners?

Not to be singular in the sense of the wicked, is to renounce all virtue.

If you do not walk in the broad way of destruction, you are singular; if you walk in the strait path, and seek the narrow gate, you separate yourself from the vast multitude that rush through the wide portals into everlasting ruin.

Remain singular! The singular ones go into heaven, whilst the children of the world remain outside.

Say, young man, what will become of you, if you accommodate yourself to the sentiments and conduct of certain youthful companions? If you praise what they praise, blame what they blame, do as they do? Do they not travel in crowds upon the broad road of sin and sensuality?

No, you have a conscience; you have your principles, drawn from the Gospel; act according to these, and ask for nothing else.

It is time for you to become a man; to be, in the fullest sense of the word—manly. You talk and dream so much of self-dependence;—where is it?

70.

THE INJURY PRODUCED BY HUMAN RESPECT.

"*He that feareth man, shall quickly fall.*" (Prov. 29: 25.)

Human respect is injurious alike to all virtues.

First of all, it interferes with our duty to God.

The external worship of God either ceases altogether, or

is wanting in those outward manifestations of reverence to which the divine majesty has so just a claim.

Behold the victim of human respect ! He is ashamed to say grace before and after meals ; he shrinks from bending his knee in church, from making the sign of the cross, or from taking holy water. He fears to show respect to the images of the Saints, and to persons and things consecrated to God ; or to observe a pious, modest, and humble deportment in church and at prayer.

If he were alone, unseen, perhaps, he would do all these things, but,— Heavens ! he cries : I do not want to be laughed at !

And why is he so seldom seen at the tribunal of Penance ? at the table of the Lord ?

Perhaps, he feels the need of these Sacramental helps ; but,—The people ! he urges. They will call me a great devotee !

Will not this, perhaps, only apparent coldness, gradually penetrate to the heart ? What will become of his poor soul, if he delay frequently to purify her from sin, nourish her with the Bread of life ?

Miserable delusion ! We are not ashamed to show honor to men ; to be polite, courteous, and agreeable to them ; to vie with each other in acts of kindness. We are not ashamed to appeal to the mighty and the rich for their favor and good-will ; we are not ashamed of satisfying the wants of the body by food and drink, rest or recreation. But you, poor soul, must famish, must do without the Bread of heaven—not because of a persecution—but through fear of a mocking word, a spiteful reproach. Thou, O my God, must content thyself with a mean, cowardly, hidden homage, because it requires courage to confess thee publicly and frankly !

Again : how will our holy Church fare, if attacked in the

presence of such a craven-hearted young man ? If it be derided, he is silent. If it be calumniated, he is silent. If it be insulted, he is silent. The priesthood is defamed, holy rites and ceremonies are scoffed at, facts are distorted, lies are forged ; he has no word of defense. All at once, he has become ignorant : he is dumb as the dead. Soon he will not shrink from even deriding, calumniating, and stoning his Mother !

Confession, indulgences, the Papacy, celibacy, Religious Orders, pilgrimages, and pious institutions,—all these are attacked in his presence : human respect has long since disarmed the coward ; yes, he joins in the attack, and strikes—oh horror !—his own Mother .

He seems only awaiting the opportunity to ask with Judas : What will you give me, and I will deliver him unto you ? (Matt. 26 : 15)—I will betray my faith, my religion, my Church, my Saviour—yea, and for less than thirty pieces of silver !

O, the unworthiness of such conduct ! O, the meanness, the inconstancy, the moral degradation ! Have we, perhaps, been transported back to the times of Nero, Diocletian, Julian ? Are we surrounded by burning stakes, roaring lions, flashing swords, a howling, raging rabble ?

Far from it ! My Saviour is not ashamed, for my sake, to hang naked, despised, forsaken, upon the cross, between two malefactors, in the sight of all Jerusalem :—and I dare not to give him even the smallest public proof of my love ?

The Church is not ashamed to take care of me, a degenerate son ; to accompany me from the cradle to the grave, with her multiplied maternal blessings ; to allow me, even as a sinner and a prodigal son, the title of a Christian, of a Catholic ! Her pure hands do not fear to raise up me, the most impure of her sons ; her chaste mouth does not hesitate to

offer me the kiss of reconciliation : yet, from my lips, there comes no earthly word in defense of her rights, her dignity, her honor, her grandeur, her beauty ! I have brought up children, and exalted them : but they have despised me. (Is. 1 : 2.)

No less have our fellow-creatures to suffer from this miserable human respect.

Is there question of those in higher places ? Through human respect, one joins in the silly cry of freedom and equality ; one rebels even against those to whom, after God, he owes everything.

And your teachers ? Alas ! they are spared neither the abuse of the slavering tongue, nor the rudeness learned from others. To torment, to despise, to lower, and do them injustice, is considered well-bred and manly ; to submit, to yield, to treat with respect and courtesy, the height of folly and disgrace !

To attack everything ; to summon everybody to an account before the judgment-seat of one's own reason ; in all things, to know the why and the wherefore ; and to surrender at no price,—belongs to the spirit of the times, shows enlightenment according to fashion. Who would dare to think and act differently ?

Heartlessness and contempt towards equals ; hardness, arrogance, lordly bearing towards inferiors—fruits of the most hateful egotism,—almost pass for virtues. This is self-reliance, firmness of character, manliness.

Is there question of principles ? The loosest are those of the majority ; they are favored. Honor, revenge, duelling, suicide, are permissible, or at least, excusable, acts. As to morality, if one only avoid the most flagrant crimes, if he but escape talk and publicity,—for the rest, human weakness deserves some indulgence ; we are not angels.

Here, a double-meaning word is spoken—you remain si-

lent ; there, a smutty one—you show no sign of disapproval ; again, a vulgar one—you laugh at it. And, in order to avoid all suspicion of narrow-mindedness, one, at last, joins in, applauds, contributes his share, outdoes—yea, vies with the rudest in nastiness , and thereby, purchases for himself among young libertines and low companions, the unenviable reputation of being a good fellow—of a young man that knows how to live—who lives and lets live,—a liberal, broad-minded young man full of "go."

In the dictionary of worldlings and sinners, intemperance is excusable weakness ; idleness—necessary relaxation ; endless, and, too often passionate, play—pastime ; reading of sensual books—culture, knowledge of the world ; extravagance—generosity ; vanity and affectation—civility ; flattery— courtesy ; untruth—necessary reticence ; ambiguity—prudence ; dishonesty—clever calculation.

Woe to you that call evil good, and good evil ; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness ; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter (Is. 5 : 20), for men's sake !

The slave of human respect is like a puppet, involuntarily performing all the motions which Satan and the world compel it to.

Pitiful rôle !—especially for a young man, who should carry his free, noble brow high in air, and not suffer it to bear the brand of a miserable bondage to creatures !

Evil companions may sneer at you, because you discharge the duties of your station ; because you study, labor, and make good use of your time. Answer : I know what I am about !

They may entice you to carousals, to dangerous amusements, say : I will not go with you !

They may press you to learn the cause of your change of life, tell them : That concerns me alone !

They may mock at your altered demeanor ; let them go on ; blunt arrows do no harm.

They may laugh at your conscientiousness ; pity their want of conscience.

Contradict when and where necessary ; have courage ; defend yourself. Here, defiance is necessary and right.

The worst thing that could happen to you in this case would be the best : that such people would let you alone.

O happiness to be rid of such perverse and false friends, and to be able, at last, to breathe freely once more !

Thou hast broken my bonds : I will sacrifice to thee, the sacrifice of praise, (Ps. 115 : 16, 17)—to serve thee as I must ; to love thee as I can ; to be guided only by holy fear, as I should !

71.

THE PROXIMATE OCCASIONS OF SIN.

"*He that loveth danger shall perish in it.*" (Ecclus. 3 : 27.)

In vain, do you penetrate into the malice of individual vices, and strive to awaken in you that detestation which they deserve. If you do not avoid the occasions of sin, all the rest will be a mere matter of the understanding, and your responsibility will only become the greater.

True, you can not avoid every danger of sin. The world is covered with snares ; the whole world is seated in wickedness, and the worst of all dangers, you carry around within yourself,—the sting of the flesh, of the passions.

There are, however, very many occasions of sin, from which you can very well withdraw yourself.

Sinful occasions are as manifold as the conditions of life. Each man, woman, and child has his, or her, peculiar temptations. No age, sex, or rank is free from dangerous occasions.

By proximate occasions, are understood those external relations by which a certain party commonly falls, be it through his own frailty, or by reason of the power with which they operate upon him.

For one, it is a certain place ; for another, a certain dangerous person ; for this one, it is a certain occupation ; for that one, an amusement, a book, a play, or something else.

The first resolution which I must make, when I sincerely turn to God, and desire to be confirmed in my conversion, is, with earnestness and determination, to avoid all proximate occasions of sin. Without such a resolution, a true and lasting conversion is altogether out of the question.

Is not the old Adam still living in me ? Am I not still the same weak, frail, sinful man as before ? Has the possibility of sin ceased, because my will has, for a moment, turned away from evil to good ?

In the next occasion, I shall probably fall again. He that loveth danger, shall perish in it,—and I certainly love the danger, if I do not keep away from it when I can and should.

In the proximate occasion, do I not, in a certain sense, challenge sin, and defy God to withdraw his grace from me ? Is God bound to give me extraordinary, powerful, and therefore, sufficient, grace, because it pleases me to be foolishly bold and wilfully to put myself into situations in which ordinary graces are insufficient.

Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. (Deut. 6 : 16.) You must not expect God to work miracles of grace in you.

Yet, this is exactly what you do when you throw yourself into the proximate occasions of sin.

In the proximate occasions, the evil inclinations awaken with renewed force ; old habits assert themselves your former blindness returns upon the understanding—the will wavers—the propensity to sin becomes stronger—wholesome thoughts retreat into the background—Satan gains more and more ground,—already, through your own fault, you are too weak to resist the pressure of temptation—you stumble, you fall !

Why did you go in the way of ruin, in spite of the warning of the Holy Ghost, and of your conscience ? Trust not thyself to a rugged way, lest thou set a stumbling-block to thy soul. (Ecclus. 32 : 35.)

It may, indeed, be difficult to you, young man, to sever certain bonds wherewith you are tightly fettered.

To give up this intercourse—to avoid that society—to shun such and such a person—to enter no more that brilliant, seductive house—to renounce this recreation—to burn that book,—how disagreeable, how difficult, how impossible !

But, my dearly beloved young man, have pity upon your own immortal soul !

In such a place, evil is spoken ; shameful words strike your ear, your heart is defiled. You join in the sinful conversation, you become more and more involved in the maze of certain well-known failings.—Save yourself, fly—to return no more !

And those other boon companions whose vicious life and low enjoyments should have, long ago, filled you with disgust,—will you not now turn your back upon them ? Only see, what you have already learned in that debasing society ! Count the wounds which your soul has received on this self-chosen battlefield ! Away—fly—save your soul !

And that foul syren, whose charms and graces seduce your heart and eye ? O young man !—you ?—in such close proximity to that vile woman ! Do you not know, then, that wine and women make wise men fall off, and shall rebuke the prudent. (Ecclus. 19 : 2.) O great, patient Job ! thou pure and prudent hero of the Old Law,—arise, and teach this rash, uncircumspect young man, to make a covenant with his eyes, that he may not so much as think of a virgin. (Job 31 : 1.)

O, flee all these youthful desires ! Follow, rather, justice, faith, charity, and peace, with those who serve the Lord with a pure heart. (2. Tim. 2 : 22.)

If, says Christ, thy right eye cause thee to offend, (if it be the occasion of sin to you,) pluck it out, and cast it from thee ; and if thy right hand cause thee to offend, cut it off, and cast it from thee. (Matt. 5 : 29, 30.) Will you hesitate to sever relations which are far less intimate, whose removal is attended with far less pain, than these ?

My dear young man, ask yourself in the presence of God, if there are no chains to be broken which hinder you from your eternal destiny.

Do not delay ; your fetters are becoming stronger and stronger ; they restrain you in narrower and narrower circles. Every moment is loss of time ; it brings an added danger of death.

You flatter yourself that you will become better, and more confirmed in good—and yet, you will not avoid the proximate occasions of sin ?

O, have sense ! Do not deceive yourself so cruelly. Do not destroy the fruits of those painful efforts, which you have already made to extricate yourself and escape eternal bondage !

Arise, be manly, shake thyself from the dust,—arise, sit up, O Jerusalem ; loose the bonds from off thy neck, O captive

daughter of Sion ! (Is. 52 : 2.) Take hold of arms and shield ; bring out the sword, and shut up the way against them that persecute you. (Ps. 34 : 2, 3.)

72.

ASSOCIATIONS.

"*My son, if sinners shall entice thee, consent not to them.*" (Prov. 1 : 10.)

There is scarcely any class that live so little for themselves, or apart from others, as young people.

In school and college, the young man is continually among others. Youthful vivacity itself, the need of association, of communication with others ; the consciousness of inexperience, the feeling of weakness in separation,—all bind him to his equals, or to those older than himself.

From this, arises the greatest danger to the young man.

Continual intercourse gradually leads to resemblance.

Manners and speech make an impression ; a friend's thought expressed in word, easily becomes my own ; his way of acting becomes mine. Natural amiability, congeniality, authority of position and age, increase this impression. The association becomes more intimate ; one imitates the other ; the friend loses himself in his friend—becomes one with him.

O how often is youthful precipitation surprised in a deplorable manner ! What dreadful snares does youth-

ful levity sometimes prepare for itself! Testing nothing, it blindly rushes ahead, and takes all for granted.

A resemblance of minds, similar tastes, a certain attraction, an overflowing wit and good humor, pertness, readiness of speech, yes, even mere physical graces alone, are decisive in friendships, and tie more or less intimate and lasting bonds.

But ah! all that glitters is not gold.

All are not friends that carry a fair outside. Trust not every one; see well to whom you commit yourself, and give your heart.

Holy Scripture expresses this still more clearly, when it says: According to thy power, beware of thy neighbor; and treat with the wise and prudent. (Ecclus. 9: 21.)

If there be question only of every-day acquaintances; of that transient intercourse with other young men, such as is unavoidable in common life—make it a rule to have absolutely nothing to do with suspicious, much less with bad, immoral, irreligious, companions. Only in as far as Christian charity demands, and an enlightened zeal for souls makes expedient, permit yourself to associate in passing with such characters; and even then, with great reserve and circumspection.

There are young people whose perversity knows not how to conceal itself. When you see a young man given to brooding, dreaming, frivolous language, unguarded talk about religion, the priesthood, pious usages, superiors, and the law;—when you see him shunning the house of God, divine worship, the word of God, and the holy Sacraments; pouring out the gall of his bitter heart against every one and everything good;—when you note the bold, lascivious eye; the gross sensuality depicted in carriage and countenance; the passionate vehemence of his wanton ways; his pleasure in drinking, gambling, and rioting;

his insatiable desire of enjoyment ; his disgusting vanity ; his loose tongue addicted to boasting, domineering, rash judgments, presumption, and want of charity ; his waste of time, and neglect of almost all the duties of his station in life ;—friend, know such an association to be a communication of death : Thou art going in the midst of snares. (Ecclus. 9 : 20.)

Without being guilty of rash judgment, you may perceive from some of these appearances, where and how far, danger threatens you. Beware ! Retreat ! Stand up with courage, where it appears prudent and expedient so to do. At all events, be on your guard against applauding such men; otherwise, you will gradually lose your independence. And —what a disgrace to writhe under the feet of such people !

Then, there are young men who are neither very bad, nor very good, neither hot nor cold ; certain harmless creatures who are dubbed by others, mere ciphers.

With these, you run no risk ; but, at the same time, you will learn nothing good or valuable. Here, fraternal charity and social civility must tell you what to do.

On the other hand, there are young men exemplary in diligence, piety, and morality. They love prayer and the Sacraments ; they are reverent and recollected in the house of God ; and even their cheerfulness and gaiety bear the stamp of a certain seriousness and amiable maturity. They respect their superiors, and scrupulously perform all the duties of their state of life. An impure word never defiles their lips ; self-restraint and decorum render their presence desirable, and their company agreeable.

Hold fast to these ; stand on their side ; defend them, encourage them, be especially amiable and obliging to them. Even from a transient intercourse with them, you will derive much advantage.

If there be question of a more intimate intercourse, in

which one will mutually confide the inmost thoughts and feelings of his heart to the other—first of all, endeavor to be sure that he whom you intend to make your confidant, is really good and virtuous, possessing the reality, as well as the appearance, and being able to stand the test of the closest observation.

Away with all those who are a hindrance to you in the important affair of your sanctification !

Away with those who endeavor to alienate you from prayer and the reception of the holy Sacraments—who only praise the world, its enjoyments, honors, and pleasures,—who are engrossed with vanities, and who only therein seek their consolation and happiness ; to whom the supernatural is folly : and who seem, so to speak, inaccessible to a higher conception of life ! Do such persons suit you—you, who are already too much disposed to mistake the serious side of life ?

Away with idlers, tattlers, good-for-nothings—people who do not perform the duties of their own state of life, and are displeased with others who fulfil theirs ! How they would be pleased, if you would live as they live ! Unconsciously, they will draw you into their magic circle, allure you into gambling, unworthy pastimes, societies, theatricals, pleasures of a doubtful nature. And will the evil stop there ?

Let them go their ways. Let them frequent their favorite saloons, empty their glasses, make the street-corners their chosen lounging-places ; let them see, and be seen ;—you have something better and more serious to do : you have your soul to save, God to serve, heaven to gain.

With such associates, you can learn nothing good, but only what is bad, or leads to bad. If a closer intercourse be not truly profitable to you, it is injurious to you.

He that toucheth pitch, shall be defiled with it : and he

that hath fellowship with the proud, shall put on pride. (Ecclus. 13 : 1.) The same may be said of all vices.

Be not deceived : evil communications corrupt good manners. (1. Cor. 15 : 30.)

Take heed to thyself, and attend diligently to what thou hearest ; for thou walkest in the danger of thy ruin. (Ecclus. 13 : 16.)

He that walketh with the wise, shall be wise : a friend of fools shall become like to them. (Prov. 13 : 20.)

Be not a friend to an angry man, and do not walk with a furious man : lest perhaps thou learn his ways, and take scandal to thy soul. (Prov. 22 : 24, 25.)

Be not delighted in the paths of the wicked, neither let the way of evil men please thee. Flee from it, pass not by it : go aside, and forsake it. (Prov. 4 : 14, 15.)

My son, if sinners shall entice thee, consent not to them. If they shall say : Cast in thy lot with us,—my son, walk not with them ; restrain thy foot from their paths. For their feet run to evil. (Prov. 1 : 10-16.)

But how, if you should have had the misfortune of forming a friendship with a wicked associate ?

O then, come forth out of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans ! (Is. 48 : 20.) Go out of the midst of her, my people, that every man may save his life from the fierce wrath of the Lord ! (Jer. 51 : 45.)

And if you have inadvertently been betrayed into an intercourse which was not bad in the beginning, but which you now perceive is dangerous for you, either because the friend walks in evil ways, or, because the friendship degenerates :—break it off at once, quickly, decidedly, and completely. Only by doing this, is there safety from mutual destruction !

73.

BOOKS.

"*Separate thyself from thy enemies, and take heed of thy friends.*" (Ecclus. 6 : 13.)

There are, also, inanimate friends, who exercise great influence —namely, Books.

Here, too, an intimate intercourse takes place.

Thoughts and sentiments are exchanged, one becomes fond of the other ; and, finally, intercourse begets resemblance.

Upon the young man — especially upon him who is susceptible and highly imaginative—books exercise a powerful influence.

O young man, in this matter, be very much on your guard !

Your thirst for information impels you to read. You desire culture, and know that books promote it.

Many idle moments are employed in reading.

The world is flooded with books. Every where there are opportunities for reading—public and private libraries, circulating libraries, magazines, journals, and legions of newspapers.

You are handed books, you are pressed to read them ; your studies themselves require you to be well-read.

And amongst all these books—how many are poisonous, how many deadly ! Here, especially, the words find application : Therefore, hath hell enlarged her soul, and opened her mouth without any bounds : and their strong ones, and their people, and their high and glorious ones, shall go down into it. (Is. 5 : 14.)

Titles arousing the curiosity, elegant finish, suggestive illustrations, cheapness—snares in abundance ! Add to this, the inexperience of the young man, the blindness of some parents, the bad counsel of others, and the general example.

The spoken word, because it is life, exercises great influence, but the effect of the written word is exceedingly powerful.

The former dies away, the latter remains. The one is generally the creature of the moment, while the other is well digested, arranged, smoothed and polished. The first is heard only once, while the latter may be read over thousands of times. That takes effect only upon a limited number of hearers, while this may be read by millions of present and succeeding generations. A book may be translated into different languages, and, through the marvelous lightning-like facilities of the press, may be spread through whole countries and continents, may bring a blessing or a curse, may build up, or pull down. A book has a thousand tongues ; it speaks from heart to heart, and makes a deeper impression, the more solitary the reader, the more undivided the attention.

Learn the power of bad books from their dire effects : confusion of ideas, want of principle, false wisdom, faulty education, overturning of all rights, aversion from God, corruption of morals, paganism !

Many things are dignified with the name of enlightenment ;—but, O infernal light, which sheds abroad the lurid light of hell ! Smoke thou art, horrid smoke, in comparison with the pure, divine light of truth !

First of all, young man, moderate your thirst for reading.

You know, you can know, the duties of your station in life. If you discharge them faithfully, you will certainly have very little time left for the perusal of silly books. At all events, you had better learn what is conducive to your

calling, through a moderate reading of useful books—by doing and practising, rather than by cramming your mind with useless ideas, or exciting images.

Do not rashly seize upon the first book that falls into your hand.

Even in regard to those books which are to prepare you for your future calling, be on your guard. If, therein, you understand how to separate the precious from the vile, you shall be as the mouth of God (Jer. 15 : 19), an enlightened, a wise man.

In any case, the education to which you aspire, must be a true one ; but education at the cost of the heart, is false, is madness, is the ruin of both mind and heart !

What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world (Matt. 16 : 26), at the cost of his poor soul ? What does it profit a young man to know all things—to be well-read in everythings that is, or is called, classical, if he suffer the loss of his soul ? O cruel hell-fire, enkindled and fed by the indestructible fuel of pernicious writings !

And, from such muddy sources, you would draw pure cultivation ?

With regard to light literature, you must be as exact as in your choice of friends.

Be cautious. Be not led astray by promising titles, by elegant, elaborate finish, nor by the names of celebrated authors.

Even the recommendations of others should have weight with you only as far as is conducive to the salvation of your soul.

If any man shall say to you : Lo, here is Christ, or there —do not believe him. For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets ; and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch as to deceive (if it were possible) even the elect. (Matt. 24 : 23, 24.) Of many books, it is said : This is beau-

tiful, that is harmless ;—nevertheless, be on your guard.

What do you care for the testimony of those who, perhaps, are not in earnest about their salvation ? He that is of the earth, of the earth he is, and of the earth he speaketh. (John 3 : 31.)

Avoid whatever the Church in any manner forbids to be read. She means well, she loves you, she has power over you ; she can, and must, demand of you that you religiously protect her honor and your own salvation.

Avoid whatever you know to be bad or doubtful. Bad is every book which directly, or indirectly, jeopardizes either faith or morals.

Avoid, also, that which gives you just apprehensions. To make experiments here, would, at least, be fool-hardy and presumptuous. If you need counsel, consult your spiritual director.

Avoid effeminate literature. Do not waste precious time upon profitless books which do not fulfil the end of rational recreation.

Moreover, know how to govern yourself. If, in reading a book, you meet with anything which assails your faith, or which causes you to blush for shame,—away with the serpent !

Even if the poison be ever so sweet, even if it present itself to you in all the adornment of the most elegant diction :—nevertheless, it is poison all the same, and its effects are deadly as the venom of the asp. Separate thyself from thy enemies, and take heed of thy friend. (Ecclus. 6 : 13.)

Again : be master of yourself ; do not suffer the love of reading to so engross you, as to make you unreal and absorbed.

Avoid excess in reading ; otherwise, your powers of thought will become weakened ; your mind will resemble

a kaleidoscope, in which bits of color of every shape are mixed up, without any regular or definite design.

To cause this vagueness in us, to enervate, to unman, to divert us from the real earnestness of life and from our accustomed duties, to over-excite the imagination, and then to weaken and demoralize it,—are some of the chief effects of novels and romances. In their wake, flows the deluge of sin, with its bombast, sudden showers and torrents of feelings, its foam, tumult, shipwreck, corpse, and carcasses.

Do you see that young man—how he broods over his book half the night? He is deaf and blind to all about him; he devours, and is devoured. What interest! What eagerness! All the passions treated of in the book, find an echo in his heart. Love, hatred, ambition, envy, revenge, rage, despair—what a chaos of feelings! What feverish excitement! What a mosaic of varied images! What a different world from that by which he is surrounded!

If the novel be an impure, obscene one—what a detestable atmosphere does not the poor young man inhale! How the imagination is defiled! How the blood circles in his veins! How the evil spark glows already under the ashes, and threatens soon to break forth into a bright flame! Ah,—perhaps, the next moment witnesses his sudden fall, or, at least, his resolve to perpetrate that wicked action

How can a man hide fire in his bosom, and his garments not burn? (Prov. 6 : 27.)

How can a man so hate his own soul? Knowingly and wilfully, he casts himself between the sword and the spear, and leaves it to blind chance to preserve himself unharmed.

Young man, you have enough to do to arm yourself against the violence of your unruly passions. At least, add no more fuel to the flame. Forswear bad books at once

and for ever. Save your soul. Give ear and credit to those who have your interest at heart.

74.

TEMPTATIONS.

"*Gold and silver are tried in the fire, but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation.*" (Ecclus. 2 : 5.)

THE YOUNG MAN. How true it is, O Lord, that the life of man upon earth is a warfare! (Job 7 : 1.)— Satan, the world, the flesh, the passions, youthful impetuosity,—what assailants are these! Visible and invisible enemies,—enemies without us, enemies within us, enemies around us, cunning enemies, indefatigable enemies, cruel enemies!

CHRIST. Be not afraid, my son. With my grace, you are more powerful than all your foes combined. If you knew what treasures these temptations hide, what means of overcoming them are at your disposal, — surely, you would never complain.

THE YOUNG MAN. But, O my God, they are intent upon my destruction. They have conspired against me, and by violence, they endeavor to thrust me into the abyss of hell. From all sides, they rise up against me. and seek after my soul. (Ps. 53 : 5.)

CHRIST. Let them seek your ruin, my son,—I have care of your best interests by thus permitting it. False security would be the most dangerous thing for you. But these unceasing temptations continually remind you of

your frailty, make you watchful, and compel you to ask for my help.

Still worse would be the loosening of the bond between me and you. No doubt, temptations might separate you from me, and yet they attach you still closer to me : they make you feel your dependence upon me, that you can do nothing without me. (John 15 : 5.) In temptations, your eye involuntarily raises itself to heaven, your hand seeks my hand, your heart clings to mine.

Temptations have still another benefit : they remind you that your true home is not here below. Earth is a place of trouble, of warfare, and of danger. I hear you say : Woe is me, that my sojourning is prolonged ! (Ps. 119 : 5.) And : The days of my pilgrimage are evil (Gen. 47 : 9) ; who shall deliver me from this body of death ? (Rom. 7 : 24.)

O how good this is ! The truest and most blessed sentiment that a man can have, is the longing for heaven !

Temptations offer you an opportunity of doing penance. Aside from the fact that they often originate from past sinful habits, from that levity wherewith you formerly cast yourself into the arms of vice : they fill you with a wholesome shame, humble you, and incite you to mortification and self-control ; they impose upon you severity, self-denial, and renunciation.

Temptations purify you. Gold and silver are tried in the fire, but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation. (Ecclus. 2 : 5.) The dross is separated from the pure metal ; what is mine is severed from what is yours. Self-love, self-interest, vain self-gratification, are put down. The things of this world become more and more indifferent to you, and by degrees, as enticements to sin, even hateful. You are aroused from your inactivity ; the spur goads you, though it may hurt you,

Temptations, my son, are not by any means a sign of my displeasure. Was not Tobias a faithful servant? Did he not serve me with the greatest sincerity and magnanimity? Yet, you know the message I sent to him by my angel: Because thou wast acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptations should prove thee. (Tob. 12 : 13.)

Yes, it is often a mark of my special love when I send trials and tribulations. I offer the opportunity of proving fidelity, of acquiring merits. Is this not love? Is it not reward?

Temptations strengthen you. Through every resisted temptation, the will acquires a new degree of strength, an increase of its capability of determining itself for good. Is not a virtue which has never been put to trial, a weak and doubtful virtue? What doth he know that hath not been tried? (Ecclus. 34 : 9.) Certainly, holiness would be an easy and comfortable thing if it could be acquired without labor, if it could be maintained without combat.

Temptations prepare for you your heavenly crown; they embellish it, and increase your glory and happiness for all eternity. You conquer a certain desire or inclination—and behold, a reward is laid up for you; you conquer a hundred times, and a hundredfold reward awaits you.

And yet, you complain of temptations?

True, you should be humble enough not to challenge them; but you should, also, have a sufficient stock of fervor, sufficient desire of progress, not to be afraid of them.

THE YOUNG MAN. But, O Lord,—I shall fall! I am yet so young, so inexperienced, so weak!

CHRIST. Fear not, little flock, for it hath pleased your Father to give you a kingdom. (Luke 12 : 30.)

Have confidence; I have overcome the world (John 16 : 33.)

You have, my son, a High-priest, who has compassion,

who knows the infirmities of this earthly life ; why should he not pity your weakness ? Is he not at all times ready to help you ?

I know the dust (Ps. 102 : 14) which my hands have fashioned.

I know, O my son, your inexperience, the malice of your enemies, the violence of your passions : my help will be proportionate to your needs.

My dear child,—behold, I have graven you in my hands : your salvation is always before my eyes, and dear to my heart. (Is. 49 : 16.) Yes, my son, over thee I watch with special solicitude, as over the apple of my eye.

75.

ILLUSIONS AND FAULTS IN TEMPTATIONS.

"*Believe God, and he will recover thee.*" (Ecclus. 2 : 6.)

For the young, there are a multitude of illusions and faults in temptations. Great is the cunning of the serpent, against whose stings we have carefully to guard ourselves.

The Evil One represents to us in glowing colors, the advantages which we shall gain by sin. The imagination becomes heated, the passions inflamed. O how charming appears that sin ! How sweet, how desirable, that enjoyment ! On the other hand, how difficult is resistance ! How hard it is to do this,—not to do that !

In the moment of temptation, Satan represents pardon for sin as easy of attainment. You can go to confession again ; you can do penance ! Only just this once, and then, never again !

But, when once the sin is committed, then the arch-enemy represents amendment, conversion, as almost an impossibility. You can never repair this evil ! Its consequences are too terrible ! The temptation is stronger than you are ; you must surrender !

These are horrible delusions—delusions which are followed by the worst results.

The tempter openly contradicts himself ; and from these contradictions, you may best know the spirit of untruth which is his most potent weapon.

Yes, lies upon lies.

It is not true that sin is really sweet. How can that be sweet, against which the conscience revolts, which is accompanied by confusion and shame, and draws sorrow and reproach after it ?

After resistance and victory, you are cheered by interior commendation ; consolation, peace, and repose follow after the conflict. And if sin should really produce a certain gross pleasure—it is gone almost before you are conscious of having enjoyed it. But the sting, alas ! remains, with the fierce, burning pain of an ulcerated wound.

It is not true that conversion is so easy. Is it not a work of preventing grace ? May you not die in the very act of sinning ? or immediately after it, or, at least, before you have seriously thought of repentance ? And in that case, where is your contrition ? where, the confession ? where, the satisfaction ?

Satan's whispers are not only lies, but also incentives to black ingratitude towards God. He counsels you to requite his infinite goodness with supreme malice.

Again, it is not true, that to rise after a fall, even after many falls, belongs to the realm of impossibility. Before the deed, Satan represents it as so easy to rise again, but after the sin, as so difficult, so impossible. How is this? Is any bad habit ineradicable? is amendment unattainable? is victory impossible?

Verily, Satan is a liar, and the father of lies. (John 8 : 44.)

My son, guard yourself against all these delusions. You readily perceive how fallacious such representations are. Before sin—have fear; after sin—have confidence; this is truth.

But you have, also, to avoid certain faults.

Do not get impatient when temptations assail you, or last for some time.

To be surprised at temptations, is to sadly lack self-knowledge. To wish to escape them, is to claim a privilege which was not granted even to the Saints.

Son, when thou comest to the service of God, stand in justice and in fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation. (Ecclus. 2 : 1.)

If the temptation continue, lose neither patience nor courage. In your patience, you shall possess your soul. (Luke 21 : 19.)

What? will you then give way to despondency? And who are you that tempt the Lord? This is not a word that may draw down mercy, but rather that may stir up wrath, and enkindle indignation. You have set a time for the mercy of the Lord, and you have appointed him a day, according to your pleasure. (Judith 8 : 11-13.)

Has grace, perhaps, lost its saving power? Is the hand of the Lord shortened? (Ps. 59 : 1.)

O no, my son! Trust in God; he will make all right again. Believe God, and he will recover thee. (Ecclus. 2: 6.)

Man's necessity is God's opportunity.

And if you have had the misfortune to fall, say not with so many foolish young men : Now, everything is lost !

Such language is frequently the confession of cowardice, rather than of impotence.

Will you consent to give up the fight altogether ? Will you agree to throw down your arms, and surrender ?

If soldiers were to act thus, where would be their honor ? Where would be their victory ?

Be manly. Fear not. Stand your ground. The Lord will give you the victory over all against whom you fight. (Jos. 10 : 25.)

O no !—never throw down your arms. If you have had the misfortune to displease God, speedily do penance, and challenge the divine wrath no more. Beg pardon. Strive for justice for thy soul : and even unto death, fight for justice, and God will overthrow thy enemies for thee. (Ecclus. 4 : 33.) Yes, let the defeat which you have suffered, make you only so much the braver ; for now, the question is to make good your losses, to redeem your lost honor.

76.

CONDUCT DURING THE TIME OF TEMPTATION.

"*Resist the devil, and he will fly from you.*" (James. 4 : 7.)

Temptations vary according to the character and spiritual condition of the tempted. According as a man approaches nearer to, or recedes farther from, Christian perfection, his temptations will be more violent or more gentle, more sensual or more spiritual, more open or more concealed.

Ordinarily, temptations allure a man by promise of some

carnal or sensual good. Seize it, they say : forbidden or not—take, and enjoy !

Hence, it is necessary, above all things, for a man to be on his guard. Reason and faith must maintain control over the senses.

Be vigilant ; keep the interior so ordered that the approaching temptation may be descried from afar.

If chaotic confusion reign in the heart ; if everything there be in wild disorder ; if the spirit be driven round about in the whirlpool of levity ; if prejudices of all sorts envelop the understanding in a dense mist,—it is impossible to perceive, in advance, the approach of the enemy.

The besiegers are in the midst of the citadel. Before you are aware of it, Satan has taken possession of your heart ; he is your master ; he holds you fast bound in chains.

If negligence be dangerous, how much more fatal is it to open the door to the temptation !

How foolish, how unjustifiable, is it not, to sally forth into the occasion of sin, to play with the temptation, to betray to it the weak spot in your armor ! Yet, how often this is done by the unwary young Christian !

If the temptation has obtained an entrance within the walls, however, beware of thinking it invincible.

God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able : but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it. (1. Cor. 10 : 13.)

Nevertheless, be not presumptuous, nor trust rashly in your own strength. Self-reliance, or purely natural means, will not avail to overcome the least assault. Lift up your eye and your heart to the mountain of God, from whence help shall come to you. (Ps. 120 : 1.) Is any one in trouble or need ? Let him pray, says the Apostle. (James 5 . 14.)

Yes, my dear son, pray, as soon as the temptation arises. Unite yourself at once to God, the best, the most powerful, the most untiring, the most necessary Ally. Call on Jesus. Recommend yourself to the protection of Mary. Sign yourself with the sign of the cross. Pronounce the sweet and potent names of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Cleave fast to God, as one whom the wild waves threaten to wash away from the saving rock which he has grasped.

The most important thing, however, is that you immediately offer resistance.

Do not allow the temptation to gain a hair's breadth upon you. To perceive it and to resist it, should be a simultaneous action.

Resist the devil quickly and decisively, and he snall fly from you. (James 4 : 7.)

Ah ! here, the majority make a great mistake ! At first, they let the temptation have its way ; they examine, they caress it, they play with it ; and all the while, they are standing on the brink of a precipice. Presently, it draws them forcibly down ; dizziness seizes them ; the understanding becomes dark, the will wavers—and, alas ! a sudden, but easily-to-be-foreseen fall follows. He that loveth danger, shall perish in it. (Ecclus. 3 : 27.)

If the temptation continue its assault, if it rush upon you still more impetuously, reflect upon some elevating, salutary truth.

God sees me. How can I do this wicked thing, and sin against God ? (Gen. 39 : 9.)

What do I gain thereby ? Short is the pleasure,—eternal the punishment !

What did I promise to God when, but lately, he so generously pardoned me ? Is it thus I would repay his goodness ?

Again :—how, if death should overtake me in the act of

sinning, or immediately afterwards? O—the eternal, terrible torments of hell!

What am I about to do? To commit a sin! And sin is the only, the greatest evil,—a rupture with God—the death of the soul—the loss of heaven—the slavery of the devil!

Shall I, then, offend God, who has shown me nothing but kindness? Shall I insult him who is my Creator and my Father?

Where is my crucifix? On it, hangs a Saviour dying for me! O, let me look into thy loving eyes, into thy open, bleeding wounds, my sweet Jesus! Is it thus I shall repay thee, and renew thy sufferings?

No, O my God, I will die rather than sin! I will not. Begone, Satan! (Matt. 4: 10.)

Do you believe that such thoughts would not be efficacious?

Another very excellent means is, to direct your thoughts to something else—read something. Speak to some one, distract your attention. But, on no account, look the temptation in the face. It must be enough for you to know that it is a temptation.

How grand it would be to make the temptation the occasion of good! Nothing would put the devil to shame more than this.

Therefore, if you can, perform an act of virtue contrary to the sin to which you are tempted.

In this way, you beat the enemy with his own weapons; you dishearten him from trying again; for he surely takes no delight in promoting your salvation.

In the days of your sorest temptation, let your prayer be more fervent and more frequent; read some pious book, practise some mortification, do some good work.

After overcoming a temptation, thank God heartily. Re-

joice in your restored peace. But do not lay aside your weapons. The tempter has only drawn off his forces for a little while. When all the temptation was ended, the devil departed from him for a time. (Luke 4 : 13.)

Behold, how long, carefully, and arduously the young warrior prepares himself for battle. And yet, he fights merely for some petty temporal gain. A little money, a transitory glory, a perishable crown,—these are all the awards that earth can offer her bravest heroes. But the whole life of man is a warfare, (Job 7 : 1)—a combat, which concerns the soul for time and eternity.

From early youth, one must practise this spiritual drill, if he would early learn the right manner of vanquishing temptation.

Will you succumb to the enemy in the very flower of your age, and bear the brand of infamy upon your youthful brow? O, if you but succeed in conquering Satan in your undeveloped manhood; if, (weak as you are,) you then repulse your enemy, and cover him with ignominy, he will leave you in peace, he will dread to approach you when the ripeness of age shall have provided you with the skilful weapons of experience and strength.

77.

VENIAL SIN.

"*A fool will laugh at sin.*" (Prov. 14 : 9.)

You cannot erect bulwarks enough around the fortress of your heart.

Hatred and detestation of every grievous sin, holy fear of God, flight from the occasion, freedom from human respect,

courage against interior temptations,—these are, as it were, the necessary out-works of the poor human heart, which is uninterruptedly assailed by its foes, and incited to treason against the Lord God.

We shall never be secure until we cease to regard **venial** sin as something excusable.

The resolution to avoid, as far as possible, the least deliberate offense against God, must form one of the most essential bulwarks, one of the most necessary defenses, of the soul. At that barrier, the attacking enemy is stopped ; he is made aware of the earnestness of the interior resistance ; he comprehends the value which is placed upon the fortress itself.

Are you not resolved to avoid venial sin ?

Is it not an offense against God ? an ingratitude ? a rebellion ?

Was not the blood of Christ poured forth on its account —for its atonement ?

After mortal sin, there is not a greater evil than venial sin.

Did the Saints inquire : Is this a mortal or a venial sin ? Did they not rather endeavor with all the strength of their will, to remove and avoid everything which they knew to be displeasing to God ?

Venial sin ! True, it is easier remitted than mortal sin. Good works, prayer, and Sacramentals can blot out these lesser faults and imperfections ; and they are not absolutely matter of confession. Nevertheless,—what do I see ? Enlightened by faith, I behold a place, deep, dreary, and filled with torments of every kind ; a place of unsatisfied, and yet exceedingly violent, desire for the vision of God, of which the sorrowing inmates have deprived themselves by their own fault.

Surely, there shall not enter into heaven anything de-

filed. (Apoc. 21 : 27.) Only such as are clean of heart, shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord, and shall stand in the holy place. (Ps. 23 : 3-5.) The dross of the soul must be removed, even if it should be as by fire. (1. Cor. 3 ; 15.) None but pure gold must line the walls of the heavenly palace, if it would reflect back the rays of divine splendor proceeding from the Most High !

I ask myself now, in all sincerity : How have I hitherto acted with regard to venial sin ?

Who shall reckon that mighty multitude ?—More or less voluntary distractions in prayer, irreverences before God, or in his holy places, uncharitable thoughts and judgments, unkind and bitter words, inconsiderate, offensive jests, the lesser, but, after all, well-known neglects of duty, unguarded feelings, self-complacent, boastful speeches, sensual and, perhaps, even lustful, imaginations and desires, faults proceeding from want of self-control in eating and drinking, ill-suppressed motions of the various passions !

What a chain of frailties and miseries ! And how little pains do I take to break it !

O my God, how slavishly do I not serve thee .

It is only a question with me how I can escape hell and everlasting perdition ; but, for thy love, I can make no sacrifice ; for it, I am incapable of the least magnanimity ; I insult it,—it is of no consequence to me.

O young man, cultivate a sensitive conscience. If it has become somewhat hardened, renew its lost tenderness and delicacy. Otherwise, contact with the world and with sinners will familiarize you with vice, and make your restoration to early innocence more and more difficult, if not impossible.

Heed not the spirit of the world. Listen not to its foolish protest : This is only a venial sin !

True, a thousand venial sins do not make one mortal

sin ; because mortal sin is of a different species from venial sin. But even this latter is, and ever will be, a violation of the divine law ; it is an evil in the sight of God, because it assails his infinite sanctity and majesty, even though it be not with the same degree of malice as mortal sin.

None but a fool or a madman, will laugh at sin of any sort. Such a one does not, or will not, understand what it is to offend God.

The truly wise man, he who is of sound mind, regards solely the pleasure of God, and labors to satisfy him in little as well as in great things. To him, God is King, Lord, Father, Friend ; to him, God's wish is sacred, God's commandments his only rule, God's love the chief motive of all his actions.

He says : Thou hast set me a law, and hast pointed out thy will as my path. Direct my steps according to thy word : and let no iniquity have dominion over me ! (Ps. 118 : 102, 133.)

78.

THE DANGERS OF VENIAL SIN.

"*He that contemneth small things, shall fall little by little.*"
(Ecclus. 19 : 1.)

He who is not resolved, with God's help, to avoid deliberate venial sin, is certainly not as much in earnest as he should be in his hatred of mortal sin. He is not honest in his desires to save his soul.

It is not an easy matter to determine in every case where

venial sin ceases, and where mortal sin begins. Before he is aware of it, one may step over upon forbidden territory.

A sin is venial because of the insignificance of its object; or, of the want of knowledge, or consent. The limits are not always exactly defined; and how dangerous is a mistake in such an important matter!

At all events, many a venial sin stands in close relation to mortal sin. You are walking on the brink of a precipice. If even one little clod, the one nearest the brink, give way under your feet, you may slide into the terrible abyss, and be lost. And how do you know, how near you are to the edge?

As sickness gradually causes the death of the body, so venial sin paves the way for the death of the soul. And just herein, lies the danger of venial sin.

The more frequently you commit venial sin, the nearer you are to a grievous fall.

The more careless you are in its regard, the more precipitous becomes your path to the abyss, the looser becomes the clod on the brink of the precipice.

Venial sin diminishes divine love in the soul; if not in its essence, at least, in its activity. We grow more indifferent to sin, we become used to it. If an unusual incitement, a more pressing temptation assail us,—we do not hold our ground.

Venial sin grieves the holy Spirit of God. (Ephes. 4 : 30.) It destroys his operation in us; it labors to extinguish the fire of charity in the heart. Grace decreases: the special help is diminished in the same measure in which our infidelity increases.

Satan becomes bolder; he sees that we trifle with sin. He nourishes this carelessness; he lulls us to sleep with a crafty smile. We slumber, until a terrible fall cruelly awakens us.

Behold, how true is it that he that contemneth small things, shall fall by little and little ! (Ecclus. 19 : 1.) He that is unjust in that which is little, is unjust also in that which is greater. (Luke 16 : 10.)

By slothfulness, a building shall be brought down, and through the weakness of hands, the house shall drop through. (Ecclus. 10 : 18.)

Venial sins are like rain-drops ; tiny things in themselves—and yet, in time, they destroy strong walls and timbers, change stately palaces into heaps of ruin. Ah ! let us not overlook or despise even the smallest faults. See how, in every-day life, the truly wise man pays attention to little things, since, on them, may depend great things and mighty results.

Is it only the grave wounds of your body that you hasten to cure ?

Do you suffer a number of dirty black specks to remain upon your face ?

Do you repair only the large rents in your garments ?

And yet, is not the soul more precious than the body—its raiment more valuable than any earthly garment ?

If you really love your soul, avoid venial sin.

Behold, how it disfigures the image of God, and dims its brightness within you ! It covers the soul with a loathsome leprosy, with ugly ulcers.

Venial sin does not, indeed, drive the Christian out of his road to heaven, but it leads him thither by a crooked, circuitous way ; it brings confusion and obstacles into the business of salvation.

Venial sin darkens the understanding, weakens the will, increases the passions, dulls the conscience, and gives strength to bad habits.

Venial sin disinclines us to good, by interrupting good habits and turning the faculties to evil.

Venial sin deforms our good works ; it resembles the devouring worm on the vine of Jonas—the poisonous insect on the rosy-cheeked apple—the withering decay upon a lovely flower.

Venial sin makes God more reserved in his dealings with us, and restrains him from giving us greater proofs of his love. His intimacy with us decreases, his consolations are withdrawn or diminished, good inspirations become weaker and rarer.

O young man ! all this, you have never considered in your levity. But is it not really so ? Does faith speak another language ?

Learn, then, to pay great attention to little things.

Set your spiritual household in order ; prevent every possible damage ; overlook no possible gain.

Fear to offend God—in little as well as in great things. He that feareth God, neglecteth nothing. (Ecclus. 7 : 9.)

Love God, and be faithful in little as well as in great things ; he is ever the same great, good, and amiable Father, infinitely worthy of our love and devoted service.

79.

PRAYER.

"*Pray without ceasing. In all things, give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus, concerning you all.*" (1. Thess. 5 : 17, 18.)

He who knows how to pray well, knows also how to live well.

Prayer helps us out of sin.

Prayer keeps sin at a distance.

Prayer begets virtue.

Prayer perfects virtue.

Therefore, he who does not know how to pray well, does not know how to live well. How much less will he know how to live well, who does not pray at all?

Without me, you can do nothing, says Christ; I am the vine; you, the branches (John. 15 : 5) : only in me and through me, you receive sap and nourishment.

Of ourselves, we have nothing, and can do nothing. Poor, needy, and helpless, as we are, wholly dependent upon him who contains all good within himself, because he himself is the sovereign Good,—we are directed to pray, in order to obtain his aid. Prayer is the key to the treasury of our heavenly Father.

Without the divine assistance, there is no salvation; without prayer, there is no divine assistance;—hence, without prayer, there is no salvation.

True, God gives some, and especially, the first graces,

without our asking for them ; but the succeeding graces depend upon prayer, because we are to obtain salvation through our own co-operation.

With the increasing necessity for divine assistance, the necessity for prayer also increases. Hence, we must pray especially in time of temptation. And, as youth is that period of life which is threatened by so many dangers, which is so weak and needful of help, we must dedicate to prayer that golden seed-time, on which so decisive a harvest depends.

Final perseverance is granted only to persevering prayer. We cannot merit this grace : it can only be prayed for.

But, O my God, why should I need all these arguments to drive me to prayer ? Thou art the overflowing Fountain of all power, wisdom, and goodness ! To be permitted to draw near to thee, to converse with thee, must be the greatest of all honors, the sweetest of all delights !

Prayer is the elevation of the soul to God, in order to praise him, to give him thanks, or to beg his help.

To praise God, to adore him, to pay our homage to him, as our Creator—what can be more sublime, what more delightful ?

To acknowledge the receipt of benefits, to discharge the debt of gratitude, to return love for love—what is more natural, what is sweeter, or more praiseworthy ?

In need and anguish, to give expression to our feelings, to relieve the over-burdened heart, to implore protection against spiritual and corporal dangers—what can be more just, wholesome, or consoling ?

O my God, thou knowest all things ; thou knowest my wants and miseries infinitely better than I do ; they are known to thee, before I think of presenting them before thee ! Thou art, also, infinitely good, always ready to help. Thou art amiable beyond all comprehension, and even

preventest my wishes,—nevertheless, thou desirest me to acknowledge my dependence on thee, and my need of thy help, by making use of a means which will enrich me with new merits, together with the granting of my requests .

And is it not thy will and command that I should pray? What has been oftener, more plainly, or more emphatically inculcated? We ought always to pray, and not to faint. (Luke 18: 1.) Watch ye and pray. (Matt. 26: 41.) Pray without ceasing. In all things, give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus, concerning you all. (1. Thess. 5: 17, 18.)

And, O my son, how many things have you not need to pray for?

You stand at the entrance of life; O, pray that God may shed his light upon your path, which already threatens to lose itself in the mists and clouds of uncertainty.

Pray, that God may support your weakness, and guide your ignorance; for, behold, already the road grows steeper, and stretches away closer to the yawning abyss!

Pray, that God may protect you; even now, crafty robbers and evil-minded, blood-thirsty enemies lie in wait for you.

Are you dead through sin? Pray. O give, at least, this one sign of a possible resurrection. Though the prayer of a sinner is not real life, it is still a spark, from which life may be enkindled anew.

If you are sick and wretched—pray. Prayer heals, prayer strengthens, prayer raises up, and restores one's lost vitality

Are you weary and heavy-laden?—pray. Prayer gives rest—it lends wings to the soul.

Pray, young man, that your precious jewel of innocence may not be lost. And if it be lost,—if the petals of this once charming, and snow-white lily be withered and soiled with

mire,—pray, implore God to restore that lovely flower to its pristine purity. Behold, ere the petition has ceased to sound in heaven, the lily blooms again—it breathes forth its sweet odor, to the delight of God and the Angels! Thus, shall your body become a clean dwelling for the Holy Ghost; thus, shall your members be made worthy to be, one day, refined and purified with the splendors of eternal glory.

Pray, that the poisonous breath of the world may not harm you.

Pray for wisdom to discover, for prudence to escape, the snares of the Evil One; for strength to burst asunder his insidious bonds.

Pray that you may ever make the salvation of your soul your first and most important business.

Pray for strength against human respect.

Pray, that you may faithfully and intrepidly discharge all the duties of your state of life.

Pray for humility, for a submissive and obedient mind, such as is becoming to youth.

Pray for deliverance from violent temptations.

Pray for the grace of making a good choice in the question of your state of life,—a matter, so decisive for time and eternity!

Pray, that you may mature into a true man, into an ornament of the Church, a useful member of society. a consolation and honor to your own family.

Pray for your parents, superiors, benefactors, friends,—for all who are interested in your salvation, and mean well to you.

Pray for your enemies and adversaries.

Pray for all the needy, suffering, and helpless. Those for whom you pray are benefited by your prayer, and you yourself, derive no less benefit from it. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. (Matt. 5 : 7.)

Yes ; ask, and you shall receive ; seek, and you shall find ; knock, and it will be opened unto you. (Matt 7 : 7.)

Pray with reverence, pray with humility, pray with confidence, pray in the name of Jesus, pray with fervor, pray with perseverance, pray with resignation to the will of God, pray much, pray often,—yes, pray always, and love to pray.

Do you not know that, apart from the graces which you obtain through prayer, prayer of itself is a conversation with God—that it is the intercourse of the soul with the Highest, Purest, and Best, which possesses an incomprehensible power of sanctification ?

On one occasion, Moses had the honor of speaking to the Lord on Mount Sinai, and of remaining a long time in his presence. Lo ! when he descended from the mountain, his countenance was illumined, and rays proceeded therefrom, (sure evidences of his having been with God,) and the children of Israel were afraid to come near. (Exod. 34 : 29, 30.)

It is impossible for us to hold frequent and intimate intercourse with a person, without gradually imbibing his spirit and sentiments, and adopting his manners and habits.

If this be true of intercourse with men, why should it not be equally true of conversation with God ?

God is a pure spirit ; the more, then, I converse with him, in prayer, the more I think of him, long for him, and prayerfully turn to him, the more do I become spiritualized, —the more does the pure, subtile essence of God pass over into me, and repress the rough, the carnal, the earthly. The heavy mass of matter is elevated by the resistless power of the spirit : the flesh cannot hinder the soul from mounting upward.

On the contrary, the less I enter into intercourse and

close communion with this Spirit,—the more seldom, the more tepidly I pray,—the more will the flesh, the world, and my gross animal nature, gain the upper hand over me.

Sad is the soul which is separated and cut off from the Source of life, forsaken and abandoned under the heavy weight of its lower nature, which holds it down, oppresses, and stifles it, seeking to dispirit it, and to reduce it to the level of the flesh.

Do you not see, how much prayer can lighten your warfare against the lower nature ?

Prayer purifies and allays the heat of passion ; it is like a cool bath, like a refreshing breeze, to the burning heart.

Prayer is a rehearsal for heaven. We anticipate the occupation of the blessed in heaven, when we adore God, when we praise God.

O my Saviour, infuse into my heart a love for prayer ! Teach me to pray. (Luke 11 : 1.) Draw me powerfully to thee, and fix my weak heart in thine.

What is to become of me, a weak young man, if thou dost not support, aid, guide, and strengthen me ?

O presumption ! O illusion ! O haughtiness ! to desire of one's self to attain that sublime end—ineffable felicity, possession of God in heaven !

O no, my God, through and by thee alone, shall I reach my end, which is nothing else than thyself. To thee, I surrender myself ; to thee, I cling ; thee, I shall never again forsake ! Amen.

80.

FREQUENT CONFESSION.

"*A preservation from stumbling, and a help from falling : he raiseth up the soul, and enlighteneth the eyes, and giveth health, and life, and blessing.*" (Ecclus. 34 : 20.)

Some of the Sacraments, on account of their indelible character or effects, can be received only once, and some but seldom. Others there are which, from their very nature, are always at hand to assist us poor earthly pilgrims on our journey to a heavenly home ; their reception is only limited by our needs, or by the proper use we make of them.

How great and continual is our need of purification !

How profitable is it to unite ourselves frequently with the Source of all life !

Even to the most fervent soul, some of the dust of the earth daily adheres.

Even in the most pious, the supernatural bond which unites us to God is easily loosened.

And what happens to the worldling, whose repeated falls and absorption in temporal concerns, constantly threaten to separate him more and more from God ?

To receive the Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist only at Easter-time, is to reduce our Catholicity to a minimum, to hang on to the Church, as it were, by the last thread.

How many, through this tepidity and want of generosity,

place the salvation of their souls in the greatest danger!

There may be some almost passionless men who suffer little from temptation, and who are free from strong inclinations to sin: for the majority, however, the occasion of sin is frequent, the allurement—almost daily. In the majority, flesh and nature fight against the spirit and grace, to such a degree that, without a continual influx of supernatural strength, a lasting victory is not to be thought of.

One fall leads to another—a third and fourth follow at shorter and shorter intervals: the habit of sinning is re-established; the roots of evil have leisure to grow strong and ramify before the next Easter-time comes around again. And then, a confession of a very dubious character, or, perhaps, none at all—because the sinner, being disheartened, feels himself already again estranged from the service of God.

The young man who preserves his virtue by going to confession at rare intervals, or only at Easter-time, is one of the greatest of prodigies.

If he is yet uncorrupted—by going but seldom to confession, he exposes himself to the almost certain danger of perdition.

The passions grow with the years. Help from above becomes more and more indispensable; a halt in the busy rush of life, more and more necessary. The boy, the young man, ought to be taught, instructed; he ought to be warned—yes, not only once, but time and again, because of the instability of the youthful mind, which so quickly forgets good counsel and admonition.

Raging nature clamors; young blood boils and seethes; curiosity entices; and into this seductive world of fickle friends and continual bad example, a voice from a higher world should often force itself. The conscience should be sustained, the holy fear of God, confirmed; the good will

strengthened, the sinking courage revived, and the deluded eye disabused.

How, and through whom, shall this be done, if not in the blessed Sacrament of Penance—if not through the director whose clear eye perceives the serpentine wiles of the enemy of my soul, who so well knows the dangerous and vulnerable spot which the monster has chosen for its fatal sting?

From the brink of perdition,—yes, in the very moment of his fall,—a good confession has often rescued a wretched young man. "Halt!"— is sounded in the ears of the deluded victim—your soul! Eternity! Such a thing is bad! That leads to evil! Behold, such will be the end of these evil practices! Fly—fight—save yourself!

Even in the event of a deadly wound, it is not incurable, if frequent confession keep the conscience tender, and constant intercourse with an enlightened director give the victim an opportunity of laying bare the cruel wound.

But if a young man be corrupted,—ah! then, there is no other remedy save frequent confession.

No other remedy—do you hear? The rare exceptions can scarcely be brought into account; they only prove the rule. Question the experience of others, question your own.

Yes, for the relapsing and habitual sinner, frequent confession is absolutely necessary.

You wish to become better? First, remove the rubbish. No one erects, or attempts to erect, a new building upon a heap of rubbish.

You wish to escape from the tyranny of your bad habits? Know, that it is only by frequent and hard strokes of the hammer that you can hope to break these long-riveted chains.

You desire to extinguish the fire of your wild, impetuous

passions ? Pour water upon it again and again. Nothing puts out this flame more effectually than frequent confession.

Is it not the blindness of your understanding and the weakness of your will, that render your amendment so difficult ?

By frequent confession, your understanding is more and more enlightened, your knowledge of sin increased. One comprehends better and better its odiousness, accursedness, and danger ; sees clearer the snares of the world, of the flesh, and the devil ; becomes more and more convinced of the nothingness of creatures. Self-knowledge increases, the means of amendment become better known. When you go to confession, you call a halt upon your youthful fickleness and volatility.

God, religion, your duties in life, assume a new aspect before the eyes of your soul.

The will becomes stronger and stronger : this is not alone the effect of the sacramental grace : every effort we make against ourselves, strengthens the will and accustoms us to self-conquest. The charm of sin vanishes. Refreshing peace of soul often enjoyed, awakens the desire of its continuance ; the conscience asserts its authority more and more ; virtue, the service of God, grow more attractive.

O young man, who have, perhaps, hitherto languished in the most deplorable slavery,—if you could only resolve to go to confession often and regularly, you would infallibly be saved !

Impose it upon yourself, never to allow the sun to set upon an unconfessed mortal sin,—and you will not only be much more safe from the consequences of a sudden death, but also, be secure against the tyranny of bad habits.

We so easily forget that the Sacrament of Penance not only remits sin, but also preserves us from sin. It obtains

for us graces suitable to our age, our state of life, and the unavoidable temptations to which we are exposed.

The oftener we go to confession, the easier it becomes. The longer we stay away, the more difficult it is to discover our faults, the more awkward we become in this important business. God grant that this awkwardness and helplessness on the bed of death, may not be followed by the most terrible consequences !

Make the trial. Go to confession often,—at least, once a month. You will see that it becomes easier with every repetition.

O my God ! I often grieve and lament in secret over the weakness and inconstancy of my heart ! Miserable, almost despairing, I look down into the abyss, to whose verge my sinful passions have dragged me ; and I regard myself as lost. I am so utterly the sport of the surging waves, that I fail to struggle against them.

Vain lamentations ! Cowardice ! Folly ! I can dam up the stream, and bring the waves to a stand-still—not by a mere passive looking on, or wringing of my hands ; not by an unmanly surrender of myself—but by a faithful employment of those means which he who has created me has placed before me.

I can escape the abyss which threatens to engulf me—but it is only by repeatedly casting myself into thy arms, O my God, and by clinging to thee.

A preservation from stumbling, and a help from falling : he raiseth up the soul, and enlighteneth the eyes, and giveth health, and life, and blessing. (Ecclus. 34 : 20.)

81.

CONFESSIONS OF DEVOTION.

"Be not afraid to be justified, even to death."
(Ecclus 18 : 22.)

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (1. John 1 : 8.)

A just man shall fall seven times, and shall rise again. (Prov. 24 : 16.)

The good Christian, though he may fall frequently, immediately rises again.

Every man needs frequent purification. This spiritual purification takes place in the Sacrament of Penance. Here, where the invisible grace corresponds to the visible sign, we are made certain of this purification ; while mere prayer, the use of Sacramentals, the performance of good works,—all of which can effect the remission of lesser faults, and pave the road to the remission of greater ones, —allow us only to hope for that purification, and do not exactly indicate its extent.

No doubt, mortal sins are the proper matter for confession ; they must be confessed,—in their regard, confession is a necessity.

But, it is very useful to confess venial sins, and these only, if we should have no mortal sins on our conscience.

Such a confession, in order to distinguish it from the obligatory confession to which mortal sins oblige us, is called

a confession of devotion. It is always useful to confess frequently.

Would you confess but seldom, because you are not a great sinner?

Take care that you do not become one,—take care that you do not relapse,—if you persist in going to confession so seldom!

Confession is like the purifying breeze which, from time to time, is admitted into a closed room, so that the atmosphere may not become musty and unwholesome.

Confession is like the lubricating oil which is poured, from time to time, upon machinery, in order to protect it against too great friction. It is like the caustic liquid which eats away the rust, and restores the metal to its pristine brightness.

Confession awakens our zeal, partly through the increased impulse of grace, partly through our renewed good purpose, and the admonitions of our confessor.

Confession increases our strength to keep ourselves in the state of grace.

Confession is an excellent remedy against temptations. The serpent lurks among rubbish, and in ambush;—uncover it, and it will flee away. Wait not until the temptation has wounded you, but rather, before sickness, take the medicine. (Ecclus. 18 : 20.)

Confession increases our facility in the practice of virtue.

Confession unites us most intimately with Jesus; obstacles are removed; graces flow more abundantly; divine love increases; the sap of the soul gushes forth more freely; our works are more perfect and more meritorious; our heavenly crowns, more radiant.

Nothing is more pernicious, more destructive of real progress, than over-estimation of one's self—a certain proud self-consciousness, in which we would imagine ourselves

able to stand alone, to need God no longer. O, be not afraid (nor ashamed) to be justified even to death. (Ecclus. 18 : 22.)

You say that you are good ; but the truly good man is also zealous, and the zealous man shows his zeal by deeds. A worthy and frequent reception of the Sacraments is the best means of increasing zeal.

O ingratitude ! Thou, O God, hast raised me out of the mire of my sins, and hast used the Sacraments as the lever to effect this ; and now, shall I be indifferent to that which has been my salvation ?

O blindness ! the Sacraments possess such a vivifying power,—I have often experienced it ; and yet, I refuse to trust them to more and more confirm, elevate, and perfect the life to which they have awakened me !

Who talks of danger of abuse ?

Abuse may creep into everything. Do your duty, and God will not upbraid you with the abuse of his Sacraments.

You fear that you may be wanting in contrition, if you go frequently to confession ?

Include in your confession some mortal sin already confessed ; then, you cannot fail in contrition. Include that sin expressly in your accusation ; it will furnish matter of absolution.

Abuse is only to be feared when you confess merely through custom, and in that indifferent manner in which one discharges his every-day concerns. A wise director will know how to guard you against this ; he will guide you and spur you on ; by word and deed, he will assist your zeal.

If you go to confession frequently, however, do not spend much time in the examination of conscience. Do not go too much into minutiæ. Take only what was done with consciousness and forethought. Separate the certain from the uncertain. If you find but little to confess, amend

that little, and you will surely become holy, and be saved.

You say : One must not make himself conspicuous.

Quite right. Do not make a display of your zeal in the reception of the Sacraments. For the rest, take care of yourself. The salvation of your soul, and your progress in good, are your own business. Here, every one for himself.

Alas ! how many young men, in spite of their conscious needs, are kept back by false shame from a frequent reception of the Sacraments !

My young friend, you can never please the world. Do you wish to wait for its sanction and approbation ? Then, will you come too late.

Ah ! Satan and the world suggest a multitude of reasons to hinder young people from frequent confession and Communion. Now : You are not properly disposed ; then : What good does it do you ? To-day : It is too much trouble ; again : You have no time. Say : I will. To-day is my day for confession ; I need it ; that is enough. I am going !

82.

THE BREAD OF LIFE.

"*I am the bread of life.*" (John 6 : 35.)

Confession and Communion !—these are the two chief sources of grace in the New Law.

What would be the lot of us poor, miserable, sinful mortals, for time and eternity, without the Sacrament of Penance ! With all our weakness and frailty where would we

find strength for our souls, if not in the holy Sacrament of the altar?

The Lord knows our needs, and comes to help us.

If he has most generously made provision for the health and preservation of the body; how much more abundantly will he not care for the soul, which is wholly spiritual, supernatural, and heavenly, — and therefore, infinitely more precious than the body?

Ah! yes,—for the soul, he has appointed in the New Law, a nourishment, suitable to its essence, its destiny, its dignity, and greatness, its faculties and operations.

This nourishment can be nothing else than God himself; for, by God alone, the soul lives its supernatural life. He, only, can fill and satisfy it.

This is the Blessed Eucharist; for here, Christ is present —with his flesh and blood, his divinity, and humanity, truly, really, substantially—the same that gloriously reigns in heaven, sitting at the right hand of God.

I am the bread of life. (John 6: 35.) As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, the same also shall live by me. (John 6: 58.)

Jesus in the holy Sacrament preserves the life of the soul. The higher, supernatural life of the soul is grace. Jesus is life and grace, and the Source of all graces. Jesus is received and eaten in holy Communion; he becomes one thing with us.

Jesus in the Blessed Eucharist, increases the life of the soul. The worthy communicant grows, thrives, goes from virtue to virtue (Ps. 88: 8), becomes spiritually greater, stronger, and endowed with greater powers of endurance. The acquired life elevates the already existing life to increased supernatural activity.

Jesus in the holy Communion, supplies the life of the soul. As the body loses by injurious surroundings, and must be

renovated and re-invigorated by exterior means, (being of itself incapable of repairing its losses,) so the soul suffers damage from evil inclinations and the allurements of sensuality, and can be healed and strengthened only by union with that strong, eternal vitality which resides in the Blessed Eucharist.

Jesus in the holy Sacrament, delights the soul. As God has given us a keen relish, or appetite, for our corporal food, which oftentimes, by his decree, grows on what it feeds upon, so to the eating of the flesh, and the drinking of the blood, of Jesus, there are attached a spiritual relish and delight, which remain after Communion, and exceedingly refresh the soul, giving it a true foretaste of the joys of the eternal Banquet with God in heaven.

He hath given them the bread of heaven (Ps. 77 : 24) replenished with all sweetness. Only the palate of the worldling, vitiated with the taste of earthly pleasures, fails to perceive the heavenly sweetness of this Bread of Angels.

O Food of Life ! O refreshment and strength ! O heavenly medicine ! O ineffable sweetness ! O wonderful transformation into Jesus !

Yes, transformation into Jesus, union with Jesus, the living and all-enlivening Saviour !

He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, abideth in me and I in him. (John 6 : 57.)

Jesus lives in me, and I in Jesus ;—here, we are united in a wonderful, incomprehensible manner.

Sin only, and what belongs to it, our evil concupiscence, are the sole obstacles to this union with Jesus. If we are in the state of grace, the thoughts, sentiments, and actions of Jesus become ours,—of course, according to the measure of our individual capability. But, it is the design of Jesus, that all should share this perfect union.

Thus, the worthy communicant becomes more and more

transformed into Jesus ; every Communion promotes and developes this transformation.

Each time we receive worthily this blessed Food, we become more and more conformable to the divine image of Jesus ; the earthly imprint grows dimmer and dimmer in us ; the heavenly, comes out in bold relief ; and gradually, the human gives place to the divine.

O, the strength of this love and union ! I live now, not I, but Christ liveth in me. (Gal. 2 : 20.)

Young man, to what a height might not the reception of the holy Eucharist raise you !

As the hot fire quickly melts soft wax, how easy would it be for the glowing love of our Saviour to melt and fuse your youthful mind with his, in the Blessed Eucharist, if you would only allow him to develop and display his entire activity !

But, you fly from him timidly ; you do not yield yourself to him. You are not afraid of the scorching, withering fire of sensual love, yet you fly from these pure, ardent, gracious rays of divine love, which dart forth from the holy Sacrament of the altar, and long to pierce and enlighten your heart !

You recognize no greater necessity than to love, and be united with the object of your love. Here, in this holy Sacrament, you can satiate your most ardent desires. The void in your heart can only be filled by the supernatural, the divine,—by the possession and enjoyment of God, for whom that heart has been created.

83.

THE MOST EFFICACIOUS ANTIDOTE

"*In me, is all hope of life and of virtue.*" (Ecclus. 24 : 25.)

Since the holy Eucharist is replete with all graces and blessings, it must be the most efficacious antidote against concupiscence.

This poisonous root in our nature can never be entirely extirpated. So long as we are children of Adam and pilgrims on this earth, the venom of original sin will remain in us.

But this ever-active, restless concupiscence can be kept down ; this deadly sting can be dulled.

The reception of the Blessed Eucharist proves to be the most efficacious means of accomplishing this.

Jesus wills our union with himself. The closeness of this union is proportionate to the removal of all that is hostile to it. Jesus, therefore, in the holy Sacrament, according to the dispositions of the recipient, weakens concupiscence, checks its influence, and soothingly operates upon our lower nature.

How can it be otherwise ? Shall not my soul be purified by a union with the pure, virginal soul of Jesus

The pure, virginal flesh of Jesus, being eaten, being taken into my breast, must it not call a halt upon the impetuosity of my sensuality ?

The heavenly peace which the Eucharistic Jesus brings

with him into my heart, shall it not calm the storm of my passions? O yes, the overflowing stream of peace maketh the city of God joyful; and the most High will sanctify his own tabernacle, which is the soul. (Ps. 45 : 5.)

If corporal food imparts its qualities to the body, so that it assumes from it heat or cold, dryness or humidity—so, from this supernatural Banquet, (in which holiness itself and the fulness of all virtues are received,) holiness and virtue pass over into us, and efficaciously oppose the assaults of evil, and eternal ruin.

Two things keep corporal death at a distance: food and medicine for the interior, protection and defense for the exterior, by means of proper weapons. The Blessed Eucharist is a spiritual food and medicine; it is also a powerful weapon, and, as a memorial of the death of Christ it drives away the enemies of our salvation.

Jesus is the eternal Life,—hence, he combats death wherever he finds it, and pursues it to its remotest causes.

Jesus hates whatever is contrary to the life of grace; he infuses this hatred into us as often as he communicates himself to us.

Jesus wishes to remain in the heart which has hospitably received him; sin, alone, drives him away, and concupiscence allures to sin. Hence, in the Blessed Eucharist, Jesus combats concupiscence. He raises man up to himself, he seeks to detach him from a thousand sinful fetters; he strengthens his will, puts weapons into his hand against the common enemy, and offers himself as our most powerful ally. In me, he says, is all hope of life and virtue. (Ecclus. 24 : 25.)

And to this intrinsic efficacy of the Blessed Eucharist, we must add our necessary preparation to receive it; and, more especially, our worthy approach to the Sacrament of Penance, which of itself, mightily and victoriously combats sin

and everything leading to it, so that many have found through it alone, perfect deliverance.

Behold, O young man, how easy and sweet it is, by means of the Blessed Eucharist, to overcome those passions, the fury of which has often threatened you with ruin!

You complain of the vehemence of your passions, of your strong propensity to sensuality, of the rebellions of the flesh, and its never-resting inclination to what is low, base, and foul? Instead of lamenting and bewailing your miseries, avail yourself of the remedy. Make the experiment. Try it.

When has a young man remained spotless and unsullied in soul and body, without having been a friend of the virginal Jesus? without having reposed, like St. John, on his bosom, without having frequently and abundantly drawn from this purest of fountains, without having drunk of the wine springing forth virgins (Zach. 9 : 17)?

Yes, make use of this powerful antidote to sin—but do so worthily, frequently, and perseveringly.

84

HOLY COMMUNION.

"*Behold thy king cometh to thee, meek.*" (Matt. 21 : 5.)

Alas! my God! I shall never be able to make such a preparation for holy Communion as the sublimity and dignity of thy Sacrament require!

Who am I, poor atom, that I should prepare a dwelling for thee in my heart? and who art thou, that dost condescend to come to me?

What have I more than my good will? And will that suffice thee, O Holiest, O Purest, O Greatest?

However, I shall exert myself, so as not to be deficient in the necessary dispositions of the soul.

I will prove myself (1. Cor. 11 : 28), and remove mortal sins by contrition and confession.

If I do not this, I shall fail to distinguish this heavenly food from ordinary earthly nourishment, and thus eat and drink judgment to myself (1. Cor. 11 : 29) ; I shall profane that which is most holy, and be guilty of robbery, by irreverently appropriating to myself, who am most impure, the most pure Body and Blood of Christ !

I will, also, endeavor not to be wanting in the proper dispositions of the heart.

This is that preparation which is proportionate to thy majesty on the one hand, and to thy condescension on the other, O my God,—to the holy designs thou hast for me, and to the fruits which I promise to myself from the reception of this Sacrament !

I will also endeavor to cleanse my heart from venial sins. I shall make special efforts to free it from any known or intentional attachment to any sin.

I will try to be penetrated with that living faith which will make me behold the Lord of heaven and earth under the insignificant and humble form of bread.

I shall banish from my heart all uncharitable thoughts against my neighbor. The same body of Christ nourishes him, as well as me ; how, then, should dissension reign, where there is such union ? Under one Head, so loving and so gentle,—shall there be members hating, and mutually opposing, one another ?

I will acknowledge my unworthiness, and confess : Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof, but only say the word, and my soul shall be healed. (Matt. 8 : 8.)

I shall approach in humility. An humble sentiment and

disposition are indispensable to this Sacrament, wherein God in a manner annihilates himself.

I will try to be inflamed with holy love. This love is full of desire and longing. When shall I come and appear before the face of the Lord? O, as the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul panteth after thee, O Lord. (Ps. 41 : 3, 2.)

This love is anxious to adorn the heart with various virtues. A holy zeal can, of course, increase sanctifying grace (typified by the wedding garment) (Matt 22 : 12), and can add various adornments, jewels and pearls, whereby its splendor is increased.

Where is the faith of my first Communion? Where, the desire,—where, the fervor,—of that holy day?

Ah! I fear that I receive my Lord now, too often as a mere matter of routine; my devotion is superficial; hence, my Communions do not produce the expected results: they make but little impression on my soul.

O the instability of youth!—it even intrudes into affairs that are most important and sacred!

But I can remove this criminal levity, if I will. I can recollect myself a few days before my intended Communion, do some violence to myself. I can fix my mind upon the Sacrament,—be more fervent in prayer,—and perform my daily occupations more conscientiously.

The time between confession and Communion I might devote, more or less, to devout exercises. Is not time enough given to the world? Why do I not give a few hours sometimes to God?

I might read some pious book, visit the Blessed Sacrament in some church, impose upon myself some slight acts of mortification. My very first thought on the day of Communion itself, should be the near advent of the great and good King.

Behold thy king cometh to thee, meek. (Matt. 21 : 5.) Arise, and go to meet him ! be clad in light, O Jerusalem : for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. (Is. 60 : 1.)

The work is great, for a house is prepared not for man but for God. (1. Paralip. 29 : 1.)

Can it be possible ? Dare I believe it ? Is it credible that God should dwell with men on earth ? (2. Paralip. 6 : 18.)

O my God, help me to receive thee worthily !

Full of holy desire, I go to church ; I pray, meditate, repent, make good resolutions, make acts of love and petition to the Lord ;—finally, I eagerly approach the altar with a modest and humble bearing, recollected in God, and penetrated with the holiness of the action I am performing.

I have found him whom my soul loveth, I will never let him go. (Cant. 3 : 4.) I praise, I bless, I adore, I glorify ; I give thee thanks ; I pray for myself and others. Perfectly absorbed, dead, as it were, to the outside world, and not confining myself to any set prayer, I entertain myself just as my heart inspires me, with my Saviour, with the true Lover of my poor soul.

These are precious moments, which must be well employed. The sacred species are still unconsumed ; and as long as they remain, Jesus Christ abides with me truly and substantially. I am the living tabernacle of God, and I contain within me him by whom kings reign (Prov. 8 : 15) ; him, whom the heavens cannot contain ; him, that enriches them that love him, and fills their treasures. (Prov. 8 : 20.)

O Jesus Son of David, have mercy on me. (Matt. 9 : 27.) Have pity on my youth ! Come to my aid, help my blindness, my inexperience, my weakness !

O my beloved, who feedeth among the lilies ! (Cant. 2 ;

16) keep my mind and body pure and spotless, and worthy of thee! O my protector! (Ps. 83: 10) O Jesus, my fortress, hide me within thee! Poor, miserable young man, that I am, strengthen me in my combat with the world, in my warfare with flesh and blood, and all the enemies of my salvation. Jesus, in thee, I live; Jesus, in thee, I die; Jesus, I am thine in life and death!

Happy in the possession of my Saviour, I will remain in the house of the Lord for at least a quarter of an hour after Mass and holy Communion. Then, I shall retire quietly to my home, and to my daily work, firmly resolved never more to thoughtlessly break asunder the blessed bonds of holiest union with my Saviour and my God.

The entire day of Communion shall be to me a day of the Lord. Often, will the happy event of the morning return to my memory, and give me occasion to renew my thanksgiving.

This is a holy day to the Lord our God, do not mourn nor weep. (3. Esdras 8: 9.) Away with sadness! But away, also, with all levity and unbecoming distraction!

The longer I keep fast hold to my Lord, the longer he will keep fast hold of me, and—O, that I might never be separated from him any more!

85.

FREQUENT COMMUNION.

"*Come, eat my bread, and drink the wine which I have mingled for you.*" (Prov. 9 : 5.)

If our good resolutions were more lasting, and if we co-operated more zealously with grace, the effects and blessings of the holy Sacraments would also be more durable.

Why are we so unstable and changeable? Quickly, are the best impressions obliterated ; and of the greatest graces of God, nothing remains after a short time, but a few miserable memories.

To go frequently, but carelessly, to holy Communion, would be but to increase our native fickleness and frailty. Such receptions of the Sacraments would be as criminal as they are useless. But it is neither wrong nor useless, to seek, by frequent and carefully-made Communions, to renew the influence of divine grace, and recall the holy impressions wherewith you have been favored on former occasions. Thereby, you manifest your prudence, your knowledge of your own needs, and your compliance with the designs of God.

O yes, dear young man, go often to the Table of the Lord, —as often as your confessor advises,—but always worthily, after due preparation, and with the purest intention.

No one's instability is greater than yours ; nowhere does the dew of devotion evaporate more quickly than in your

heart ; hence, nowhere is the need of help more urgent and pressing than in your case.

Dangers threaten on all sides ; strengthen yourself often with the bread that giveth strength. (3. Kings 19 : 8.)

The world allures, and tries to fetter you ; lean frequently upon the bosom of your Redeemer.

The passions develop themselves ; they become menacing, and are intent upon the ruin of your soul ; unite yourself with Jesus, who is life, and who gives life.

A worthy Communion gives great honor to God. Why not pay him this homage frequently ?

Communion is a precious gift which God most generously offers us. To make good and frequent use of a benefit, gives joy to the giver.

A worthy Communion is an act of devotion and fervor. Love leads to the altar, love is sought at the altar ; therefore, communicate out of love, with love, and for love. And why not often repeat this act of love ?

In holy Communion, I aspire to a union with Jesus ; the oftener I seek it—if only sincerely—the more Jesus is pleased.

By holy Communion, I fulfil the most ardent wish of Jesus.—Why does he give himself under the form of bread ? Food is taken often, and bread, oftener than any other kind of food.

Moreover, he expresses his wish in the very clearest words : Come, eat my bread, and drink the wine which I have mingled for you. (Prov. 9 : 5.)

What an urgent invitation !

Again, he threatens : Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you. (John 6 : 54.) He who does not eat his meals every day, begins to grow weak, and lose the life of the body. Holy Communion is a most efficacious means of preserving and promoting the life of the soul.

He who goes often to Communion, follows the spirit of the Church. The early Christians received holy Communion daily. The doctors of the Church, even the Councils, strongly exhort to frequent Communion ; and, in our own days, the Church unceasingly calls upon us through her ministers, to often approach the Table of the Lord. Why should not the Church desire her children to be most intimately united with Jesus, their Head, in order, through him, to receive freshness and fulness of life ?

But, perhaps, you fear the talk of the people ?

Fear rather the scandal you give, when you go but seldom to Communion. He who often participates in this heavenly banquet, and whose life corresponds to the fervor of his devotion, edifies the community, rejoices the good, abashes the wicked, gives a good example to those of his own household, causes religion to be respected, and excites the lukewarm and negligent to imitate his piety.

The advantage, however, to be derived by you from this holy exercise, outweighs all specious arguments.

If one worthy Communion is so beneficial and profitable, because it unites you with Jesus, the Author of all graces, what will not many good and fervent Communions effect in you ?

There will be no time for evil to assert itself ; weakness will be speedily assisted, if the intervals between your Communions grow briefer. First, in quick succession, come examination of conscience, contrition, firm purpose of amendment, accusation, satisfaction,—and all this, as the remote preparation ;—and then, the proximate : Faith, hope, charity, desire, adoration, supplication, resolutions, thanksgiving !

Yes, great are the advantages of frequent Communion.

Go, ask the careless : Are you benefited by approaching the holy Communion so seldom ? Is your life more zealous, virtuous, or exemplary ? Alas ! no ; they will re-

ply : The less frequently we approach the Table of the Lord, the colder and more tepid, we become.

Ask the zealous. Do they not owe everything to the frequent reception of the Bread of life ? Greater innocence and less faults,—to what have they to attribute these happy results ?

Ask those Saints and spiritual writers who so strongly recommended frequent Communion. Did they not speak from experience ? To repentant sinners, they recommended it as a means against a relapse ; to the weak, as a source of strength ; to the just, of comfort ; to all, as an incitement to every virtue, as a powerful spur to perfection and sanctity.

O, that we lived in such a manner as to be worthy of daily Communion ! We communicate seldom,—perhaps, we so live as to render ourselves unworthy of receiving often !

Ah ! consider the consolations imparted to us in this Sacrament ! O my soul,—the sweetness which you, when well prepared, find in this heavenly banquet ! Should I not seek to procure this comfort very often, since it is in my power to do so ?

My dear young man, do you know why you fall a victim, time and again, to the deceitful allurements of the world ? Because you release yourself so quickly from the embrace of Jesus, and so seldom return to it. You soon forget the blissful moments spent with your Saviour, and instead of hastening to renew that happy intercourse, you seek solace elsewhere.

O taste and see, that the Lord is sweet. (Ps : 33 : 9.)

Go often to Communion ; and every time you make your thanksgiving, before you leave the church, happy and newly-strengthened, promise your Saviour a speedy return —after a few weeks, in a fortnight, or, better still, once a week.

86.

THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD.

"*I will feed my sheep, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God.*" (Ezech. 34 : 15.)

Raised from the death of sin to life, through the omnipotence and mercy of God ; fostered and nursed by him with ineffable paternal love ; drawn to the gracious heart of your Redeemer,—you owe it to gratitude, to once more penetrate deeply into these benefits, to meditate on them with attention, and to appreciate them in their full extent.

Well may you exclaim with the royal singer : The Lord is my shepherd, I shall want nothing ! (Ps. 21 : 1)

Yes, O Jesus, thou art my Shepherd. Thou hast spared neither care, nor watchfulness, nor tenderness in my behalf. Thou hast done all that could be done, and what is there that thou art not, even now, willing and ready to do ?

Thou art my shepherd, O Jesus—my Lord and my God (John 20 : 28), full of greatness and majesty ! Thou, the Infinite, vouchsafest to be my leader and companion ; thine eye rests upon me, thy hands protect me, upon thy shoulders thou dost bear me to the fold !

I am allowed to call myself thy sheep, O best of shepherds,—I who am a miserable creature, a weak, helpless young man, fit for nothing, requiring yet to be trained and educated !

But, it is just because I am poor and wretched, that thou art a shepherd to me, O God ! Thou takest pleasure in enriching me, that I may not want in any grace (1. Cor. 1 : 7), but superabound in holiness.

My shepherd hath led me into green pastures. (Ps. 22: 2.) Our holy Faith, with its doctrines, the word of God, salutary inspirations, good examples, ordinary and extraordinary graces, the Sacraments, in particular—those sources of immense blessings—are they not, in truth, the glorious pastures which were promised in the Old Law, infinitely more delightful and profitable than any earthly, perishable pasture ?

How true are the words : I will feed them in the most fruitful pastures, and their pastures shall be in the high mountains of Israel ; there shall they rest on the green grass, and be fed in fat pastures upon the mountains of Israel. I myself will feed my sheep, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God. (Ezech. 34 : 14, 15.)

He hath brought me up on the water of refreshment.

What are all the joys of this world compared to the pure happiness of a good conscience, to the sweet comfort enjoyed in thy service, O God of goodness ?—in thy company, O most amiable Jesus !

Rush on in your course, O troubled waters of Babylon, whence I, alas ! misguided young man, have so often drunk marshy water ! (Jer. 2 : 18.) Never again, shall you sully the lips which have tasted of the heavenly gift (Hebr. 6 : 4) ; which have been refreshed with the clear streams flowing from the river of the water of life. (Apoc. 22 : 1.)

He hath converted my soul, he hath led me on the paths of justice, for his own name's sake. (Ps. 22 : 3.)

How often, have I not, like an unfaithful sheep, left the safe fold, the wholesome and rich pasture, the pure spring, the loving Shepherd, and strayed blindly into the desert,

losing myself in a trackless country, a wilderness, a place without water ! (Ps. 106 : 4.)

And the Good Shepherd was troubled at my departure. My blindness pained him, my misfortune deeply afflicted his tender heart ; he arose, and hastened after me ; he raised his voice, he called, he entreated and threatened ; he never rested until, touched by his love, I returned, and entered again upon the way of justice.

All this he has done through love, for his holy name's sake, in order to verify the truth of his Apostle's words : Where sin hath abounded, grace hath abounded more (Rom. 5 : 20) ; and those other words of Isaias : You were sold gratis, and you shall be redeemed without money. (Is. 52 : 3.)

Now, that I am associated once more with the Good Shepherd and his flock, what have I to fear ?

Though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils, for thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me. (Ps. 22 : 4.)

No doubt, a thousand dangers surround me, inexperienced young man that I am, and menace my soul with death. Satan is wrathful, and the whole world is seated in wickedness. (1. John 5 : 19.) Flesh and blood make war upon me unceasingly ; but, O my Shepherd, if I follow thee, if I roam only the blessed pastures which thou hast appointed to me ; if I do not withdraw myself from thy protection, —from the peaceful sway of thy shepherd's crook,—I am secure, I will fear no evils. (Ps. 22 : 4.) I can say with confidence : Let any man's hand fight against me, if thou but set me beside thee, O Lord ! (Job. 17 : 3.)

And,—O blessing surpassing all other blessings !—thou hast prepared a table for me against them that afflict me ! Thou hast anointed my head with oil, and my chalice which inebriateth me, how goodly is it ! (Ps. 22 : 5.)

O sacred banquet, in which Christ is received,—he, the

Strong and the Mighty ! Shall I tremble when Jesus is with me ? Let the wolves surround me, no man shall snatch a sheep out of his hand (John 10 : 28) ; he has said so himself, the mighty Shepherd !

O goodly chalice, filled with the precious blood of Christ !

O salutary oil of divine grace, which penetrates my entire being, makes my stubborn will pliant, opens my blinded eyes, strengthens my effeminacy, increases my strength and prowess to do battle with the world !

Well, do I comprehend why the devil, the world, and the flesh so perseveringly strive to keep me from the Table of the Lord.

These enemies of my salvation know very well that they can do anything they please when once they have lured me from this way of life ; when they have removed me from the protecting influence of the Shepherd of souls ; when they have deprived me of this strengthening food, this unction from above,—this encouraging solace, this instructive admonition, this inspiring example, of this most loving of all shepherds !

No, they shall never succeed ! Let them be confounded and ashamed that seek my soul ! (Ps. 34 : 4.) It is good for me to adhere to my God ; to put my hope in the Lord God is sweet. (Ps. 72 : 28.)

O—and thy mercy will follow me all the days of my life ; and that I may dwell in the house of the Lord, unto length of days. (Ps. 22 : 6.)

Yes, O my Jesus, may the joyful resurrection which thy pastoral care has affected in me, never be followed by a relapse into death ! May the holy union with which thou hast honored me in this Sacrament, never be dissolved !

Enduring here upon earth, to the last breath of thy faithful sheep, may it be continued throughout all eternity in the bliss of heaven, where in pastures ever green, upon hills

girded about with joy, shepherd and sheep are inseparably and everlastingly united !

O rest ! O joy ! No lion shall be there, nor shall any mischievous beast go up. (Is. 35 : 9, 10.) There, shall we wander unmolested, being redeemed by the pastor and bishop of our souls. (1. Pet. 2 · 25.)

THIRD BOOK.

PROGRESS.

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87.

JESUS, OUR KING.

"I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." (Matt. 8 : 19.)

Said Pilate to Christ : Art thou a king ? And our Lord made answer : Thou sayest that I am a king. (John 18 : 37.)

Yes, young man, Jesus is a King,—he is your King.

You, too, were bought with a great price (1. Cor. 6 : 20) —the price of his precious blood ;—to you, also, the words of the Apostle are applicable,—you are not your own (1. Cor. 6 : 19) ; you are the property of Jesus ; he is your royal Master.

This truth, young man, is far-reaching.

If Jesus is your King, then, you owe him allegiance, fidelity, and inviolable attachment ; if he is your King, you, being his subject, are bound to render him sincere obedience, to be ready for any sacrifice for him.

But how much more should you not do so for him who, besides being your King, is also your Commander?

And in very truth, Jesus is our leader, a war-waging King. I came not to send peace, but the sword. (Matt. 10 : 34.)

Since you are really a soldier of this mighty King, owing allegiance to him by your birth and vocation, labor as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. (2. Tim. 2 : 3.)

Do you not see how your Chief marches forth to conquer a whole world,— to make it subject to his own, and his heavenly Father's, rule ?

Jesus would certainly be a peaceful King, if he met with no opposition,—if all would yield to his authority willingly and unconditionally. But no : sin, and everything connected with sin, defies him ; the kingdom of evil rises up in opposition to him.

The first sin of the first man had been committed. A Redeemer was promised immediately. He was to take away all sin, and recover the world to God.

True, real conflict with sin began only with the appearance of the Son of God upon earth ; it has raged most furiously from that time forth ; it still continues with unabated violence, and will last to the end of time. Jesus must reign, until he hath put all his enemies under his feet, and the enemy—death—shall be destroyed at last. All things are put under him. (1. Cor. 15 : 25-27.)

Yes, Jesus must do battle until he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God the Father,—until he shall have abolished all principality, and authority, and power (all hellish and fiendish powers). (1. Cor. 15 : 24.)

Jesus, your King, will and must abolish the empire of sin in you and every where.

For this purpose, he came upon earth ; thither, tended all his teachings, all his examples. This was the object of his warfare ; for it, he demands your co-operation ; he justly expects that you will follow him. Come, he says, follow me. (Luke 5 : 27.) And, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. (Matt. 16 : 24.)

To follow Christ—is our first duty as Christians. No age, no state of life is exempt. Whoever is a Christian, is obliged to take the field. And to all, he said ; If any man

will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me ! (Luke 9 : 23.)

From you, O young Christian, Christ expects a more zealous imitation ; a more devoted loyalty ; a more heroic courage ; a more ardent enthusiasm ; a more active participation in so noble an undertaking, touching most closely the honor of God, your own, and all men's salvation.

Hearken, then, to the call of your King, and gird yourself with the armor of God. Follow your leader in all the paths of virtue and of righteousness, in which he has gone before you. (Ephes. 6 : 11.) Say to him : I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. (Matt. 8 : 19.) Thou art the Way, the Truth, and the Life ! (John 14 : 6.) How can I be lost if I walk in this Way ? How can I err, being guided by this Truth ? How can I die, being united to Life eternal ? Even wounds received in this combat, must be life-giving.

Yes, thou unconquerable Hero ! death was life to thee ! And, full well do I know, O thou magnanimous Prince ! that thou wilt never require me to do or suffer anything that thou thyself hast not first done or suffered ! I know full well, that every step up this rugged path is marked by thy bloody foot-prints ! O glorious road, secure road, way to salvation, way to eternal glory !

Courage, then, courage ! Behold your King ! the all-powerful, strong, death-conquering, and triumphant ! Protected by him, led by him, you shall receive a never-fading crown of glory ! (1. Pet. 5 : 4.) But, remember the reward will correspond to the courage, to the spirit of self-sacrifice, loyalty, and endurance, which we manifest. None will be crowned except he strive lawfully (2. Tim. 2 : 5) ; that is, bravely and victoriously, even unto the end ; for the just cause, and with the proper weapons !

88.

THE TRUE DEFINITION OF VIRTUE.

"*Walk ye in Christ, rooted and built up in him.*"
(Coloss. 2 : 6, 7.)

Very much depends, O young man ! upon your having a right idea of virtue, and of the habit of virtue.

Perhaps, you image that virtue is any single good action ?

Virtue is no mere adherence to the letter of the law, but an entering into its spirit ; it is not something merely external, but first something internal, of which the external is only a faint reflection. It remains the same, whether seen in secret or in public. It is the spirit of charity in action. It is the practical fulfilment of the law.

Perhaps, you consider virtue, a certain honesty, a freedom from grosser and more glaring vices ?

You are mistaken.

Innocence is not virtue. There is as much difference between innocence and virtue, as between life and strength.

First of all, know this : that Christian virtue is not based upon purely human motives and views ; neither is it dependent upon human recognition or approval. Its roots go far down out of human sight, and yet reach up to the noblest heights of heaven.

True, there is a sort of mock-virtue, a certain inclination to, and facility in, good, which arises altogether from natural causes, and which, can lay claim only to a natural reward.

But you are created for a supernatural end, and ardently desire to receive, hereafter, a supernatural reward. You must, then, by the aid of supernatural grace, endeavor to acquire a supernatural virtue.

To what purpose are you a Christian, if you do not act like one,—if you are not united with your Head, Jesus Christ?

A Christian's intentions must be pure.

To act merely from sensual instinct, is to act like an animal.

To act from selfish motives, is to act humanly.

Actions to which the spirit of Christ urges us, which are conformable to the spirit of Christ, alone are Christian actions.

If God the Father has made Christ our Head, and placed him over all the Church, which is his Body (Ephes. 1 : 23), we are bound to act as members of Christ. We must walk in him, we must be rooted and built up in him. (Col. 2 : 6, 7.)

Moreover, virtue is not a single good act. Virtue is a facility in doing morally good actions, all of which have God's honor for their final end

Virtue is something which is lasting ; it is a persevering effort to do what is pleasing to God.

Virtue is, therefore, something more than a whim or caprice, more than mere accident, more than a passing enthusiasm,more than simple innocence.

Virtue is activity ; it includes the noblest operations of one's daily life. With the same conscientiousness with which the virtuous man orders his relations to God and devotes himself to prayer, he also regulates his relations to his fel-

lowmen, and faithfully fulfils the duties of his state of life.

Virtue is prayer in action.

Virtue is reverence for God.

Virtue is praise of God.

Virtue is homage in work.

Virtue is sacrifice, through labor and sufferings.

If you would know what true virtue is, contemplate the life of our Lord. Every virtue that is not formed according to his, is useless,—deceiving and deceived ; in fact, is no virtue at all. The Son of God came down to earth purposely to teach us what virtue is.

If I do not the works of my Father, said he to the Jews, believe me not. (John 10 : 37.)

Jesus does the works of his Father ; he acts in the power of the Father ; he acts according to the will of the Father.

The thoughts of Jesus, his will, are solely directed to God. He does nothing to please men ; their displeasure does not hinder him from doing what is pleasing to God.

The prayer of Jesus does not stop at mere sentiment ; it always passes over to the deed. Perfect devotedness to God, boundless love for men, self-abasement, sacrifice, and self-annihilation,—behold ! how the actions of Jesus stand in the most beautiful harmony with his prayer .

Jesus fulfils the Law ; but it is the breath of love that animates this fulfilment of the Law. The letter killeth ; but the Spirit giveth life. (2. Cor. 3 : 6.)

Every thought and movement of Jesus is directed to heaven. His sojourn upon earth, he regards as a time set apart for glorifying his heavenly Father both by word and deed.

Jesus allows to nature only what is absolutely necessary—what is conducive to the fulfilment of his mission here upon earth.

Beyond these limits, his solicitude for his Humanity does

not extend He commits himself entirely to the care of divine Providence ; in its hands, he places his honor, his repose, his well-being—to it, he leaves the provision for the few wants of his human nature.

Jesus does not reject riches, but he gives poverty the preference ; he does not condemn certain enjoyments and pleasures, but he assigns to them the strictest limits, and chooses for his own portion, sufferings, persecution, and the cross. He does not reject honors absolutely, but flees from them, and prefers retirement and humiliation. All these creatures he subordinates to the divine will, and by the free choice of the contrary, he shows how insidious and dangerous he considers them.

Jesus lays greater stress upon those sins which evince a greater infatuation, and a greater corruption of heart. These, he condemns and chastises most severely. Indulgent towards the weak, he does not hesitate to sternly rebuke the malicious and the obdurate. False justice is odious to him, and the eye-service of the hypocrite, he regards as a real abomination.

His public life is noble, unassuming, mild, and affable. He becomes all things to all men, that he may save all. (1. Cor. 9 : 22.)

It was love that brought him down upon earth ; love is expressed in his whole intercourse with men.

The weaknesses of men, he supports with unutterable patience. He is obliging, condescending, compassionate ; he goes about doing good ; all his steps are marked by blessings. (Acts 10 : 38.)

Persecutions do not crush him ; he remains intrepid in the presence of his fiercest enemies. He always gives testimony to the truth ; for truth and his innocent, holy life are his only weapons of defense. He sees in his adversaries, the executioners of divine justice ; he suffers, he

forgives, he dies—a victim of love even for his bitterest foes !

My dear young man, do you now see what virtue is ? Is it mere innocence ? Is it merely something exterior ? Is it caprice ? Is it a mere paroxysm of fervor ? Is it simply something ephemeral ?

Study attentively the life or your divine Saviour, and make your life according to the pattern that is shown you. (Exod. 25 : 40.)

89.

MEANS OF ACQUIRING TRUE VIRTUE.

" *The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence : and the violent bear it away.*" (Matt. 11 : 12.)

Nothing of any value here below, can be gained without a struggle ; virtue, least of all. There must be warfare against corrupt nature, warfare against Satan, warfare against the world.

In order to acquire true virtue, certain means must be employed ; one must do violence to himself

Be not frightened, O young man ! when you hear me speak of violence. A good, so exalted as virtue, a reward, so excellent as that of eternal salvation, is well worthy of a struggle.

Yes ; the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence . and the violent bear it away. (Matt. 11 : 12.)

You wish to become virtuous ? Then, you must will it and will it effectually.

This does not appear difficult ; and yet, as it is the most indispensable and comprehensive of all means, it is also the most difficult. It embraces the whole man ; it includes time, circumstances, and occasions. It evades no sacrifices ; it shrinks from no labor.

O, how rare is this true, sincere, undivided, active, persevering will !

You will, and another one wills ;—but what an immense difference is there not, between your will and his !

Alas ! how many vain and unprofitable wishes are mistaken for this manly will ! To desire is not yet to will ; to begin to-day, and to leave off to-morrow, is not to will. Doing something unnecessary, and not doing at all what is essential, is not yet to will !

You wonder and lament at your want of progress in good ! Have you ever yet really willed it ?

O my God ! grant to me, a weak young man, this strong, generous will ! give me, a coward, this brave, courageous will ! Give me, half-hearted creature that I am, an undivided will ! Give me, who am instability itself, a persevering will !

He who wishes to arrive at virtue, must pay attention to himself. Wilful distractions, dissipation of spirit, absorption in external things, are obstacles to virtue.

Your conscience speaks—you fail to hear it. God speaks —you pay no attention to his voice. Our Lord desires to be your Master ; he would educate you, guide you ; but you are occupied with a thousand other things ; his call does not reach your ear ; his beckoning hand remains unseen ; his inspirations are unnoticed.

To preserve a calm self-control ; to possess one's soul in patience ; to bridle a too lively imagination ; to check natu-

ral impetuosity ; to act slowly, with deliberation and foresight,—these are excellent means of advancing in solid virtue, to which nothing is more foreign than impetuosity, want of purpose, and mere, mechanical routine.

This calm spirit of recollection will also enable you, in all your thoughts and works, to study Jesus, your divine Model ; to listen to, and learn, his sentiments, to watch him in all his actions. What shall I do in order to become like to him ? Where there is no resemblance, there can be no union.

Such thoughts are quite foreign to those who are driven about by the whirlwind, or drowned in the floods of everyday life. The rush of excitement in which they live, knows no stand-still. They never belong to themselves, but are always carried away by external affairs.

O my Saviour ! how familiar, and yet how unfamiliar to me, are the details of thy earthly career !

It is almost as if thou hadst not lived for me at all ! And yet, every act of thine was done for me. Though all thy acts were part and parcel of the one, great, divine drama,—the Redemption,—every single one, of itself, possessed a redeeming efficacy ; every single one points out to us the way to heaven.

I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also. (John 13 : 15.)

And, O my Saviour, how especially instructive to me, a young man, is the record of thy youthful years ! It was in order to serve as the Model of the young, that thou didst pass thy youth in the ordinary relations of life, avoiding all extraordinary acts, and practising in their highest perfection, those virtues which especially adorn youth.

Good Master, make my heart docile ! Give me light to see ! Give me strength to act !

My Lord and my God ! Verily, thou art he who teach-

est profitable things ! (Is. 48 : 17.) Profitable for time, profitable for eternity !

Thou wilt govern me in the way that I must walk. And if I hearken to thy commandments, my peace shall be as a river, and my justice as the waves of the sea. The fruits of my virtues shall become innumerable as the sands of the sea, and my good works shall increase like the gravel thereof. My name shall not perish, nor be destroyed from before my face ! (Is. 48 : 18, 19.)

90.

THE SPIRIT OF FAITH.

"*The just shall live in his faith.*" (Hab. 2 : 4.)

To believe, and to have the spirit of faith, are not one and the same thing. Have you really the spirit of faith ?

As there is a great difference between a corpse and an animated body— between a dead and a living man—so the soul that has only faith differs widely from the soul that has the spirit of faith.

Therefore, it is said : The just man shall live in his faith. He is not a dead man, but a living man ; he works like a real, live man, through, and in, faith.

He has the spirit of faith, who is so penetrated by divine truths that they are constantly before his eyes, and serve as the rule of all his thoughts, words, and deeds.

A temptation assails you,—you quickly recollect that you are created for the service of God, that he is your Lord and Master, your Benefactor and Father, whom to displease, whom to grieve, would be the greatest evil, the most terrible misfortune.

A forbidden pleasure allures you ;—at once, you contrast the short duration of that proffered sensual enjoyment with the length of an endless eternity. You see hell yawning beneath your feet ; above you, you behold the palm and crown which await the conqueror.

The world with its thousands illusions decoys you. You say : I know thee, O wicked world ! I know that thy figure passeth away. (1. Cor. 7 : 3.) Heavenly things only have value,—why should I seize upon earthly things ?

The passions are in a ferment ; the young blood impetuously circles in the veins ; the sting of the flesh torments you. God sees me ! you think : his pure eye rests upon me. I will die, rather than do this wicked thing, and sin against my God. (Gen. 39 : 9.)

A load of affliction lies heavily upon you. Your eye naturally turns to the Crucified One. Your resemblance with Jesus calms you—comforts you ; you do not desire to descend from your cross. More sufferings, O Lord, you say, more and more !—and this cry comes from your heart.

You meet with black ingratitude ; men forget you, injure you, grieve you, are unjust to you. If I am only called the friend of God (James 2 : 23), you say : his friendship lasts for ever !

You find it hard to discharge the duties of your state with punctuality, fervor, and perseverance ; but your eye is directed towards heaven, and you think : God wills it ; he has placed me in these relations, and through love of him, I will do everything joyfully and cheerfully. Does not eternal rest await me hereafter ?

Some great calamity befalls you. You say : Two things are certain :—God knows what is now happening to me, and he loves me with an infinite love ; he could relieve me from that which is now weighing me down, and still he does not ; consequently, it must be for my good. His holy will be done ; let Providence have its sway, I submit to its desings unreservedly. If I only love God, all things will work together unto good for me. (Rom. 8 : 28.)

You find it difficult to submit yourself to others. But this truth arises before your soul : that there is no power but from God (Rom. 13 : 7) ; and consequently, that all lawful superiors are the representatives of God.

The world distinguishes between man and man ; uncharitable feelings imperceptibly arise within you. No, you exclaim, all men are the images of God, all are brethren. redeemed by the same Saviour. What I do to one of these, my least brethren, I do to Christ himself ! (Matt. 25 : 40.)

The feeling of revenge is stirred up within you ; but, at once, listening, your hear the mild and gentle voice of your Saviour saying : Father ! forgive them, for they know not what they do. (Luke 23 : 34.)

Behold, thus, the just liveth in his faith (Hab. 2 : 4), and by his faith. Faith is the element of his spiritual life. His thoughts, sentiments, desires, words, conversations, and actions, are all guided by faith—all regulated by the word of God, by the doctrine and example of Jesus.

This is what is meant, by making faith productive—to so employ it that, instead of being a dead capital, it may bring you good interest, frustrate evil, do good, bring forth fruits worthy of heaven, and become a well-spring of countless merits to him who lives in faith.

If the truths of religion are for us merely external facts without any practical bearing upon our lives or actions, then, they are of no avail or advantage to us ; they are merely a

summary of historical statements, a collection of dry tenets, and nothing more.

Youth, especially, with its own peculiar volatility of conception, its inconstancy of mind, is very much disinclined to lead this life of faith.

What strength might not a young man draw from his faith, if so inclined! What support might he not derive from it, amid the storms which beset his inexperienced age!

O spirit of Faith, when wilt thou animate me, who am so lifeless, so inanimate? What remains to me, if I merely know the truths of religion, without their passing over into my life, becoming flesh and blood—reality — practice? Nothing remains to me but the name of a Christian, and his accountability!

I believe, O my God, but do thou enliven this my faith—help thou my unbelief! (Mark 9 : 23.) Increase my faith, make me practise what I believe!

91.

PIETY.

"*Piety is profitable to all things.*" (1. Tim. 4 : 8.)

The word piety is frequently misunderstood. Hence, it is derided by some, and hated by others.

True piety, however, is something very sublime, very beautiful and praiseworthy.

There is an affected piety, which differs widely from the genuine.

Affected piety is hypocrisy; it is an absurdity; it is some-

times self-delusion ; but oftener a more or less intentional deception practised upon others.

True piety is a reality ; it rests upon that well-understood relation wherein we stand to God. It shows us God ; it places before us the Creator and the creature, the child and the Father, and calls upon us to meditate upon God, speak of him, act for him as our mutual relations demand.

Yes ;—genuine piety, true devotion to God, is based upon this fundamental principle : God is my Creator, my Lord, my Father, my Benefactor, my All ! To adore him, to praise him, thank him, pray to him,—is the business of my life. Bless, then, the Lord, O my soul ! and let all that is within me bless his holy name ! (Ps. 102 : 1.) All my bones, my body, my interior senses, paying homage to thee, shall cry out : Lord, who is like to thee ? (Ps. 34 ; 10.)

We must pay homage to God, first of all, in the heart ; then, as creatures who are not wholly spiritual, we must give him exterior worship with our bodily faculties. We must do homage to God, not only with mere sentiments, or with sounding words, but, more especially, by the submission of our will to his all-holy will.

The agreement of our conduct with such homage as this, constitutes the essence of piety, is the touch-stone of real piety, and the crown and completion of all piety.

Yes, the truly pious man is virtuous, or, at least, is on the way to virtue—not merely on account of the graces which prayer gains for him, but chiefly, because he is entirely subordinate to the designs and decrees of his God.

Does true piety then seek itself ?

It seeks God first, and above all things.

Consequently, true piety does not depend upon sentiment and imagination, nor measure the value or result of its prayer thereby. Sensible devotion is something accidental, although desirable ; God, above all ; its proper element is faith,

True genuine piety knows even how to leave God for God ; for its principal characteristic is devotedness,—the spirit of sacrifice, active love. God's holy will is its rule.

True piety does not so load itself down with exercises of devotion, as to interfere with the bounden duties of its state of life, or those of fraternal charity.

True piety knows how to so employ its time that its desires to worship God and unite itself more closely to him by prayer, may be satisfied within reasonable limits.

Neither does true piety confine itself to mere intercourse with God by prayer alone ; it knows how to give all its thoughts, words, and deeds a heavenly direction, so as (to quote the words of the Apostle), to pray without ceasing. (1. Thess. 5 : 17.)

True piety detests nothing more than mere lip-service. Who loves truth more than it does ? It is convinced that God is a spirit ; and that, to correspond with his spiritual nature, we must, above all things, adore him in spirit and in truth. (John 4 : 24.)

True piety is not ostentatious. It does not aim at singularity. It cares nothing for appearances. It gives cheerfully to God, the things that are God's (Matt. 22 : 21) ; and is not ashamed of prayer, nor of a reverential posture observed during prayer. It purifies its intentions, knowing that God chiefly regards the heart.

True piety is not self-willed, but yielding, tractable, and docile ; subjects, (especially in matters of the interior life,) its judgment to wise counsel, to tried experience. It does not fail to apprehend the dangers to which self-will and caprice may deliver a soul, even in the path of virtue. It intrusts itself to God's representatives,—the more sincerely, the more it fears the illusions of the spirit of darkness, who sometimes transforms himself into an angel of light. (2. Cor. 11 : 14.)

True piety is never haughty in its intercourse with others ; it is decidedly opposed to the delusive suggestions of wretched self-complacency.

True piety is not capricious ; it does not pray only when it feels like it. It seeks God always, and above all.

True piety is by no means intolerant. It is not hard upon others. Though it hates sin, because God hates it, it still loves the sinner, and wishes well to him. Though it may move heaven and earth in order to effect the conversion of an erring soul, it does not intrude its way of prayer and life upon others.

True piety is never dark nor gloomy. Why? Think you, that he, whose eyes are turned almost uninterruptedly to the brilliant Sun of Justice—who continually converses with a God who is all light, and in whom there is no darkness (John 1 : 5), can go about with a gloomy spirit or a scowling brow? No—serenity and cheerfulness are among the principal qualities of true piety. With God in his heart, with God on his lips, in harmony with God, and in peace with one's self, how can a man be sullen, dejected, or repulsive?

True piety knows nothing of servile fear. It knows well that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. (Prov. 9 : 10.) But it fears with love, and loves with fear.

True piety converses with God freely and unaffectedly, like a child ; there is no trace of stiffness, or formality, or coldness. It takes care that its familiarity with God may not degenerate into offensive freedom or presumptuous frivolity.

True piety nowhere denies the solidity of its principles, the dignity of its actions. As it is earnestly recollected in church and at prayer, so, in its every-day life, it carefully guards against dissipation, sensuality, and the servitude of the passions, well-knowing that these contrasts in pious people

are shocking and scandalous to the world ; that they are calculated to create enemies for religion, and even to turn away from it, those who were beginning to draw near unto God.

True piety—devotion taken in the whole—is the worship of God in a limited, as well as in a broad, sense. It is the worship of God reduced to practice—the putting into action of one's intense yearning to honor the Most High, and to comply with all that his holy will demands.

O ! what conceptions we should often form to ourselves of true piety ! Mayest thou never have to say of us, O God : This people honoreth me with their lips ; but their heart is far from me. (Mark 7 : 6.) And yet, this is what we do, when our actions belie our words !

My young friend, does piety, thus understood, deserve that scorn and mockery it so frequently receives from your wild associates ?

Do you not see, how much they are in the wrong, when they stigmatize it as hypocrisy, senility, bigotry, intolerance, ignorance ?

Ah ! look well to your own ideas. Change them, if necessary. Beware ever again of deriding piety, or pious persons, lest your mockery prove a self-accusation, and manifest your folly or your malice.

Be not ashamed to strive to become truly pious in the correct sense of the word.

There is nothing more honorable ; for piety is profitable to all things,—promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. (1. Tim. 4 : 8.)

Piety is profitable to all ; do you hear this ? It makes life sweet. In intercourse with God, there is consolation for all our sorrows. Nothing is wanting to them, who commune with God in filial reverence. They that seek the Lord, shall not be deprived of any good. (Ps. 33 : 11.)

What is it that lifts up many a down-trodden one ? that

richly compensates many a forsaken one for the world's neglect? It is the consolations of piety, and the promise which it holds forth to them of a heavenly reward.

Piety ennobles life, and makes it meritorious. True piety is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. (1. Tim. 4: 8.)

Yes; piety with sufficiency is great gain. (1. Tim. 6: 6.) It hides within it unexpected treasures, supernatural riches, graces, blessings, the friendship of God, and eternal life.

And how does piety particularly benefit a young man?

It is, as it were, the gentle breeze extinguishing the firebrand of youthful passion.

It is a shield against the hostile assaults of the world and hell.

In it, and by it, the germs of vice are choked; virtues are awakened, encouraged, and brought to perfection.

The Child Jesus prays; the youthful Jesus prays, and fulfils most exactly his duties to God, his heavenly Father. And Jesus increased in wisdom, and age, and grace with God and man. (Luke 2: 52.)

Behold your model, O young man, and imitate him!

Yes, strive for piety; let it be your only care to become pious.

A pious young man! What joy for heaven!

A pious young man! What an ornament to the Church!

A pious young man! What a profitable member of human society! His manhood is ripened in familiar intercourse with God.

A pious young man! Is he not, at the same time, an assiduous and diligent young man? Is he not pure, upright, mild, peaceable, pleasant, moral, and amiable?

O Lord! send forth thy Spirit — the Spirit of devotion and godliness! (Is. 11: 2.) Give us a pious young generation, and the face of the earth shall be renewed. (Ps. 103: 30.)

92.

CONFIDENCE IN GOD.

"*Have confidence in the Lord, with all thy heart.*"
(Prov. 3 : 5.)

How often, O my God ! does not my courage fail, when I look back upon the past, or forward to the future, and consider the many dangers that threaten me.

How much time lost in youth ! How much evil have I done ! How much good have I omitted ! How much is to be repaired ! How much, to be acquired ! And yet, how weak and blind I am, and surrounded by the enemies of my salvation !

My son, take courage ! Have confidence in me, thy God, with all thy heart ! (Prov. 3: 5.) Despondency does not repair the past, nor secure the future.

Despondency paralyzes the strength, robs us of perseverance, dims the vision, and prevents our soaring up to God.

Have I not given you proofs enough of my power and goodness ? When you did not exist, I created you ; and when you wandered far off from me, I sought you out, and led you back. I delivered myself up for you (Gal. 2 : 20) —myself, the Infinite for you, a miserable, finite creature.

Means without numbers I have placed at your disposal, that you might have life, and have it more abundantly. (John 10 : 10.)

Your want of confidence grieves me, your narrow-heartedness displeases me. Am I not able to make all grace

abound in you (2. Cor. 9 : 8), to pave the way for you, to guide your steps, and lead you to the desired goal?

And my promises,—shall they be fulfilled or not? What have I promised more frequently or more emphatically, than that I will never abandon him who trusts and hopes in me! I am the Lord, and I change not. (Mal. 3 : 6.)

Behold, you act like that disciple of little faith, who walked on the water, but trembled and thought only of his own impotence.

Miserable children of men! you believe the word of my creatures, you confide in them, you rely upon them, and look to them for help,—but you will not commit yourselves to me, the Omnipotent Creator. My hand does not seem strong enough for you!

O how blind you are! Are not creatures frail and changeable, whilst I am the Unchangeable and Eternal? Do not earthly supports resemble the frail reed that snaps asunder when one tries to lean thereon? It will go into his hand, and pierce it. (Is. 36 : 6.)

Have creatures anything as of themselves? I am the source of every good. If every best gift and every perfect gift (Jas. 1 : 17) is from me, why, then, do you not turn to me, who am, and will ever be, all in all?

Who knows the enemies of your salvation better than I? Who desires more ardently than I, that you should not succumb to them? O fear not;—the Lord of hosts is my name. (Is. 51 : 15.)

Then march boldly forward, young man! You hear the voice of your God. Cast your care upon the Lord! (Ps. 54 : 23.) He will be a real Father to you! He will protect and guide you to your longed-for destination.

Your confidence should know no other limits, than those of the omnipotence and beneficence of God himself.

It is true, I am nothing but weakness and misery of my-

self; but it is also true, I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me. (Phil. 4 : 13.)

Then, for the future, I will cling to thee ; I will love thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my refuge, and my deliverer ! My God is my helper ; in him will I put my trust ! My protector, and the horn of my salvation, and my support. Praising, I will call upon the Lord : and I shall be saved from my enemies. (Ps. 17 : 2-4.)

93.

THE LOVE OF OUR NEIGHBOR.

"*Dearly beloved, let us love one another, for charity is of God.*" (1. John 4 : 7.)

It is by no means enough not to hate our neighbor.

Dearly beloved, let us love one another. (1. John 4 : 7.) This is the watchword of Christianity—that holy, sublime religion, which elevates us far above nature, unites us by supernatural bonds, and points out to us our true relations to God and our fellow-men.

I give you a new commandment : That you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this, shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another. (John 13 : 34, 35.)

How has Jesus loved me ? He loved me, and delivered himself for me. (Gal. 2 : 20.)

He delivered himself for me as a victim to the justice of

his heavenly Father ; he took upon himself the guilt of my sins ; he underwent freely the most unspeakable tortures for me ; he died upon the cross for me ; he instituted, as a remembrance of his death, the adorable Sacrament of the Altar, and he still remains therein, through love for me.

Thus, Jesus loved me, and I must love my neighbor as Christ has loved me ! Yes ; I, too, should be willing to sacrifice myself for my fellow-man ; I should share my portion with him ; my hand, my heart, my possessions, my health, should in a manner belong to him as it does to me.

Our Saviour gives us still another rule to guide us in our love for our neighbor : Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. (Matt. 19 : 19.)

How do I love myself ? Is my love for myself merely a passing affection ? Do I love myself coldly and ineffectually ? No : I love myself perseveringly, I love myself most ardently. I avert from myself all that is evil ; I wish for myself nothing but what is good. I am constantly solicitous to provide for my own welfare, and to promote my own interests. Thus, I love myself ; and my love for my neighbor must closely resemble this active self-love.

In order to have such a love, a powerful, a sublime motive is necessary ; and this is no other than the love of God. A Christian love of one's neighbor is from God. It loves the neighbor in God. Let us love one another, for charity is of God. (1. John 4 : 7.) It beholds in a fellow-being the image of the common Creator ; it recognizes in him a fellow-creature redeemed by the blood of Christ ; a member of the mystical body of Jesus Christ, and co-heir with us to the kingdom of eternal glory.

There are many delusions in regard to the love of the neighbor.

There are young men to whom Christian charity is synonymous with philanthropy. But the difference between

them is not less than that which exists between a mere puppet and a living, breathing body. Philanthropy is an inanimate corpse with icy hands and a frozen heart.

There are young men who love only those who esteem them, or who do them favors, or from whom they expect favors, benefits. There is nothing supernatural in all this. If you love those who love you, what reward shall you have? do not even the publicans the same? And if you salute only your brethren, what do you more? do not also the heathens the same? (Matt. 5 : 46, 47.)

There are young men who love only those whose characters, or mere external appearances, impress them as being worthy of love. What supernatural affection is there in this? Even animals love each other in like manner. A heathen may cherish a strong affection for an irrational object, such as a painted image, a flower, a tree, a dumb beast.

There are others whose love does not extend beyond their household or near relatives. Narrow minds, limited capacities, niggardly souls, compressed into the straitened boundaries of flesh and blood,—men who have not the remotest conception of the love of God! If Almighty God loved none except such as were of like nature, or allied to himself by essence,—poor men! how would it be with us?

Love has its regulations according to rank and dignity; there may be greater or lesser claims upon our love for others. Our benefactors should take precedence; and those with whom we are joined by the ties of blood—our parents, above all. Then, follow our brothers and sisters and others nearly related. Then come those whom necessity compels to appeal to us for help.

There are also degrees of love. We must distinguish as to whether we are to love a certain person more or less in this or in that manner.

This may be difficult when it concerns one and the same person; but it is not impossible. God wills it, and good order enforces it. Even our heavenly Father acts thus with us, when he permits his sun to shine upon the good and the bad, and his rain to fall upon the just and the unjust. (Matt. 5 : 45.)

Would you like to have the whole magnificent picture of fraternal love unrolled before your eyes?

Charity is patient, is kind : charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely, is not puffed up, is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth : beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth. (1. Cor. 13 : 4-8.)

O, make the attempt, young man, and strive to acquire this heavenly virtue! You see, there is question of practice. My little children, let us not love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed, and in truth. (1. John 3 : 18.) Thus, God has loved us, and thus, he continues to love us. We must be imitators of God, as beloved children, and we must walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath delivered himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God. (Ephes. 5 : 2.)

Inordinate self-love stands in the way of a true love of our neighbor. Through it, we either do not love our neighbor at all,—or we love him only in so far as his love brings us some benefit or advantage.

Would you indulge in such cold egotism, at the risk of having your heart become torpid and insensible to good? Would you presume to discriminate where God makes no distinction? Although he, our gracious Father,—for reasons known only to himself,—from time to time manifests his preference for this or that creature, he embraces

with a true paternal, impartial love, all those whom he calls his sons. (Ps. 81 : 6.)

He who has no love, resembles that senseless idol that never gives, but always takes ; that stands there in a magnificently-adorned room, with golden draperies, and glittering jewels. Enthroned amid clouds of incense, beholding innumerable victims shedding their blood as a sacrifice before it, and offering homage to it day and night,—it moves not, it does not approach, nor reward its worshippers ; it cannot hear, nor grant their prayers ; neither can it protect, nor deliver them from evil.

He who loves his neighbor, is like the brilliant, mild, glorious sun, which shines, warms, fructifies, illuminates all things, dispensing blessings to all ! It gilds the humble roof of the straw-thatched hut, as well as the stately pinnacle of the lordly castle ; it hovers over the steep heights of the mountain, whilst it pours its rays down into the valleys ; its beams and its warmth diffuse joy, refresh the heart, and make all men unite in praise and jubilation.

O Spirit of love ! inflame my youthful heart !

O, that I might become like those early Christians, upon whom even the heathens themselves gazed with wondering admiration, and of whom they said : Behold, how these Christians love one another !

94.

HOLY OBEDIENCE.

"*Ye young men, be subject to the ancients.*" (1. Pet. 5 : 5.)

O my God ! thou hast given me parents and superiors that they may guide me here below, and conduct me to my end !

How silly I act, if I look upon these my superiors, with mere human eyes !

How perversely I act, if what they bid me to do, I either omit, or perform only through slavish fear, or from mere human motives !

Obedience !—mysterious word, that few fathom, and that very few put into execution, in its fullest extent.

Obedience,—odious word, at which many young people take offense, and which they regard as synonymous with humiliation, weakness, and cowardice !

Then, indeed, O sweet Jesus, thy example is folly, and vain is the entire history of thy holy youth recorded in these significant words : He went down with his parents, and came to Nazareth : and was subject to them. (Luke 2 : 51.)

It is true, my self-love is not pleased to make another's will mine, and to do at another person's command what is perhaps distasteful or painful to me.

It is true, my pride rises up against my superiors. It is intolerable to it to be dependent upon another, to listen to his counsel, to be ready for his service,

But can I overturn the whole order of earthly things? Can I disarrange the gradations of age or condition, or abolish the salutary order which originates in God himself, and upon which the very existence of human society depends?

Who am I, that would withdraw myself from obedience? Am I not a young man, obliged by my inexperience and weakness to depend upon others,—through whom my knowledge and will, so to say, may find their complement and completion?

What would become of me, were I left alone without a guiding hand?

Does it behoove my youth to carry so high a head, and permit none to be placed above me in authority? I am little more than just come into this world, and hence, have nothing to say in it. Neither age nor merit give me the right to rule. Moreover, it is worth nothing when one commands, who has not first learned to obey.

I would, however, deceive myself, if I considered as obedience, the mere carrying into execution of certain commands.

f obedience is to be a Christian virtue, the living breath of faith must animate it.

Who commands me? The lawful representatives of God —parents, teachers, spiritual and temporal superiors, who point out to me my duties, my actual position. There is no power but from God. (Rom. 13: 1.)

How much this view of the question would facilitate the duties of obedience! God, and not man, speaks through my superior, I should say to myself; and then, I would hasten to accomplish joyfully the most difficult, nay, even the most disagreeable task.

God wills it—who should not obey humbly, willingly, quickly, and perfectly, knowing that the command proceeds from so exalted, so powerful, a Lord and Master?

God wills it—who would not readily obey when he considers that it is the wish of so generous, so amiable a Father, and so munificent a Benefactor ?

Unless our motives be supernatural, our obedience will be neither universal, enduring, effective, nor powerful.

It will be, in most cases (and especially, in difficult matters), bitter, painful, yes, insufferable !

It will be, likewise, lacking in merit. Only to supernatural motives, is given a supernatural reward. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward (Matt. 6 : 2), said our Lord of the Pharisees who observed the ordinances of superiors from human motives alone. They did their duty, they escaped reproof, but they incurred only divine censure and punishment. Wretched reward !

Ah ! faithful obedience is a perfect mine of heavenly treasures ; it ennobles the Christian and enriches him ; for an obedient man shall speak of victory. (Prov. 21 : 20.)

I will, therefore, obey courageously and faithfully the injunction of the Apostle : Ye young men, be subject to the ancients. (1. Pet. 5 : 5.)

Obedience, when practised for God's sake, is honorable, is meritorious. Why should a false liberty entice me and endanger that true, manly freedom which consists in rendering unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God, the things that are God's ? (Luke 20 : 25.)

Obedience exalts ; but disobedience degrades,—whether it arise from self-love, pride, obstinacy, or any other of the evil passions of men.

Christ was obedient—obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Phil. 2 : 8); and should I not bend my neck, recognize a lawful authority over me, and execute orders which are for my own good, and for the preservation of necessary order in the family, the state, and the Church ?

95.

MEEKNESS.

"*And be ye kind to one another, merciful, forgiving one another.*" (Eph. 4 : 32.)

Youthful impetuosity is a fierce adversary to the necessary and amiable virtues of meekness and peacefulness.

Why is young blood so hot? Quickly it bubbles up, hurrying along the young man's unguarded heart to indignation, anger, and rage.

Oftentimes, the slightest offense is sufficient to embitter you ; to fill you with thoughts of aversion, rancor, and hatred ; to make you give vent to inconsiderate expressions, noisy speech, abusive language, threats, and violence.

When the passions are raging, the voice of reason is no longer heard ; excitement gains the upper hand ; enmity ferments quarrels, excites to words and deeds, such as nothing but blind rage is able to suggest.

Like a hurricane, anger takes possession of the unguarded heart. Dark clouds have suddenly arisen ; it storms ; the tempest rages. Thus, we can see what wrath and anger can do. A spirit that is easily angered, who can bear? (Prov. 18 : 14.)

Often, that concealed anger, that suppressed rage, leads to something far worse. For long days and nights, passion seethes and boils in those impoisoned hearts. Woe! to the closed up, corroding wound if it should suddenly burst open!

Irascibility prevents a great deal of good. No virtue can thrive upon such volcanic ground. Grace loves a peaceable soil. It thrives and flourishes only in love ; and where there is no peace, there is no love. Where envying and contention is, there is inconstancy and every evil work. (James 3 : 16.)

What is to be done ? Let each one watch carefully over himself ; especially that irascible one who is well aware of his weakness, and who has often been prostrated by those sudden cyclones of ill temper.

Never engage in a quarrel, young man ! Should you be naturally quarrelsome—naturally of the number of those who cannot bear the slightest contradiction or insult ; who are hasty in judgment, inconsiderate in speech, rash in deeds of violence—sullen, dogmatic, provoking,—for ever making discord wherever you appear ; if, like Ismael, your hands are against all men (Gen. 16: 12),—I beg of you to restrain yourself by the meekness and gentleness of Christ ! (2. Cor. 10 : 1.) If any one provoke you, stand on your guard ; do not quarrel or revile ; learn, at least, to keep silence, and to remember the words of Holy Writ,—the lips of a fool intermeddle with strife (Prov. 18 : 6), and, it is an honor for a man to separate himself from quarrels. (Prov. 20 : 3.)

Moreover, you must be careful never to enkindle bad feelings in others. Do not provoke any one by untimely taunts, bitterness, irony, malicious sarcasm, rude attacks on his honor,—by censure, slander, or a spirit of contradiction.

Guard, as much as possible—especially in the presence of certain, irritable people—against imprudent expressions, which might be misunderstood, and sow discord. If meat scandalize my brother, I will never eat flesh, lest I should scandalize my brother. (1. Cor. 8 : 13.)

Once more. If any one gives you an occasion of anger, if you are attacked unjustly, try not to lose your temper ; do not suffer yourself to get angry or violent ; endeavor rather to adjust the difficulty by friendly words ; for a mild answer breaketh wrath, but a harsh word stirreth up fury. (Prov. 15 : 1.) Such conduct, far from lowering you, (as you might imagine,) in the estimation of others, rather exalts and ennobles you. He who remains lord over himself, always stands higher than he who by quarrels and insults, degrades himself, and manifests the greatest of all weaknesses,—want of self-control.

To hinder an insult ; if possible, not to mind it ; to act as though you had not noticed it ; to attach no weight to it ; to forget it quickly,—is more prudent and meritorious than to become excited, to insult, or threaten. This is especially to follow the example of him who has imprinted upon meekness the seal of true nobility ; and who, when he was reviled, did not revile : when he suffered, he threatened not. (1. Pet. 2 : 23.)

This is true nobility ; this is heroism ; this is greatness of soul !

Children make a noise, but men remain quiet ; weak persons go out of themselves with shrieking frenzy, and are the more despised for their weakness ; strong souls possess themselves in peace, and are highly esteemed in consequence.

O be ye kind to one another, merciful, forgiving one another, even as God hath forgiven you in Christ. (Eph. 4 : 32.)

It is true, much has to be borne here below ; and there is no end of human frailties. For this reason, the peacemakers, that is, those who do not lose their own peace, nor disturb that of others, are called the children of God (Matt. 5 : 9), imitators, friends, favorites of him who is the God of peace. For he is not the God of dissension, but of peace

(1. Cor. 14 : 33) ; and he sent his only-begotten Son into this world for the sake of peace. How highly important the spirit of peace is for your maturer life, for the family circle, for the state, and for neighborly intercourse !

On the contrary, what an extremely pernicious member of human society is not the hot-headed fellow,—that disturber of the peace, that man of discord, who construes everything wrongly, who is always in the right, who must always have the upper hand ; who offends every one, and is so easily offended himself ; who is satisfied with nothing, interfering in everything, and who, at the same time, refuses to endure anything ! Abominable egotism !—to demand concessions from every one, but to grant concessions to none.

Let us earnestly strive to check an ungovernable temper. The fruits of such efforts are so sweet, that to acquire peace the greatest sacrifices should be most joyfully made.

The fruits of the Holy Ghost are,—Charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, mildness, faith, modesty, continency, chastity. (Gal. 5 : 22, 23.)

96.

FORGIVENESS OF INJURIES.

"*Man to man reserveth anger, and doth he seek remedy of God ?*" (Ecclus. 28 : 3.)

Nothing is more difficult to the natural man, than to love one's enemies. Our whole being rebels, our injured pride revolts against it ; the heart is obdurate and insists upon its rights.

Since the commandment of fraternal charity extends even to our enemies, it is evident how perfect the Christian law is, and how it ennobles the whole man, by the suppression of every inordinate feeling.

Who is our neighbor? Every man. Whosoever is clothed with the same human nature as ourselves; all for whom the only-begotten Son of God became man, lived, and suffered; for whom the same heavenly recompense is in prospect, which invites us to struggle. It is clear, that if a man really or presumedly offends us, he does not thereby lose his claim to the same nature and destiny as our own.

Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, saith the Lord our God. (Gal. 5 : 14.) Lest any Christians imagine, that there are certain exceptions to this rule, our Saviour declares emphatically, and with all the force of an added command: But I say to you: Love your enemies: do good to them that hate you: and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you, that you may be the children of your Father, who is in heaven. (Matt. 5 : 44, 45.) Jesus emphasizes the difference between then and now, between his doctrines and the statutes of men:—But I say to you. He interweaves this necessary forgiveness of injuries into the prayer which he taught his disciples; he even makes it a condition of the pardon they hope for from God: Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. (Matt. 6 : 12.)

Is this clear?

With you, young man, there can not easily be any question about important injuries, offenses against your honor, wrongs done to your goods and fortune, attacks upon your body, or your life.

Here, an inconsiderate word has wounded you; there, the omission of some act of politeness has irritated you; now, it is a little act of kindness that has been refused. Again, some expected praise has been withheld; you have been over-

looked, or contradicted ; a rude jest or a coarse word has hurt your feelings.

Shall trifles such as these, be sufficient to estrange hearts, to awaken feelings of hatred, occasion bitter expressions, enmities, ill-will, rancor, revenge, and acts of violence ?

Do you not see that wounded vanity, selfishness, and jealousy, are often the only sources whence flow what you term "just indignation" ?

You speak of injured honor, slighted friendship, violated fidelity. If Almighty God were so sensitive with us ; if he were so unmerciful and unrelenting ; if he were so slow to forgive and to forget our offenses,—what would be our lot ?

How often, do we tax the patience and longanimity of God, whilst we would have our neighbor bitterly expiate every error he has hastily committed against us ! Even when we grant him a grudging pardon, we relentlessly refuse him his lost place in our affections.

Man to man reserveth anger ; and doth he seek remedy of God ? He hath no mercy on a man like himself ; and doth he entreat for his own sins ? He that is but flesh, nourisheth anger ; and doth he ask forgiveness of God ? who shall obtain pardon for his sins ? for corruption and death hang over in his commandments. (Ecclus. 28 : 3–7.)

Remember the fear of God, and be not angry with thy neighbor. Remember the covenant of the Most High, and overlook the ignorance of thy neighbor. (Ecclus. 28 : 9.)

Forgive thy neighbor if he hath hurt thee ; and then shall thy sins be forgiven to thee when thou prayest. (Ecclus. 28 : 2.) He that seeketh to revenge himself, shall find vengeance from the Lord ; and he will surely keep his sins in remembrance. (Ecclus. 28 : 1.)

But you say : There is no talk of revenge : I do not wish my enemies any evil ; I simply want nothing more to do with them in future.

O, comfortless language, beneath which, the sting of animosity is concealed! Is indifference, love? And—O, that it were simply indifference! But it is ill-concealed irritability; it is a feeling of revenge for a real or fancied offense; it is the inclination to embrace the first opportunity for retribution.

Unworthy disciple of him, who, upon the cross, prayed for you, for whose sake he suffered: Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do! (Luke 23 : 34.)

Have you ever dared, in such a state of aversion, of fostered implacability, and of burning hatred, to approach the table of the Lord? to unite yourself in the Most Holy Sacrament, with him who is all love, and who wills that you should be all love? No, I am sure that you have never abused so completely the Sacrament of Love.

You say, I owe it to my dignity, my manhood; I cannot suffer myself to be despised; I must show him that he is in the wrong. You stand, then, upon your rights? Very well.—God will also stand upon his rights. But I say unto you, love your enemies. (Matt. 5 : 44.) God so stands upon his rights that he will not allow himself to be offended by your implacability. He will have that person loved, whom he desires us to love, and whom he does not exclude from his own divine love.

Far from us be the thought of returning evil for evil, of revenging ourselves! Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good. (Rom. 12 : 21.)

Revenge not yourselves, but give place to wrath; for it is written: Revenge is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. (Rom. 12 : 19.)

On the contrary: If thy enemy be hungry, give him to eat: if he thirst, give him to drink: for doing this, thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. (Rom. 12 : 20.)

Young man, let not anger possess your soul. Always

refuse entrance into your heart to thoughts of hatred, of bitter feelings, of malicious desires, of revengeful plans. Here, you must prevent the first beginnings.

If anything displease you in your fellow-man, remember, that you, too, have your faults and frailties ; and that others must have patience with your weaknesses. Bear ye one another's burdens ; and so shall ye fulfil the law of Christ. (Gal. 6 : 2.)

Have you been offended ? To return good with evil, is diabolical ; to return good with good, is human and rational ; but to reward evil with good, is royal and divine.

O, elevate yourself, young man, to these heights ; and imitate God himself in the immensity of his charity. Be noble-minded. Step aside from the limits of your narrow, human heart, and act divinely !

Search into your interior, O friend ! Examine your dispositions in regard to this or that person. Is there any ill-will, or bitterness, therein ? Are ill-feelings fermenting in your bosom ? Is there any desire of revenge there ? Are you cordial to all, and do your actions prove that none are excluded from your heart ?

Let not the sun go down upon your anger ! (Ephes. 4 : 26.) Be reconciled, without delay, fully, and sincerely !

Behold ! the day of your own judgment is approaching ! Be disposed to forgive others, that you may then find your Judge favorably disposed towards you !

97.

THE PRESSING DUTY OF CHARITY.

"*Reverence not the neighbor in his fall: and refrain not to speak in the time of salvation.*" (Ecclus. 4 : 27, 28.)

If, as a traveler, you were taking the wrong road, would you not be pleased if some one would warn you and show you the right way?

Apply to your neighbor this proof of a well-ordered self-love. He has gone astray; he has, perhaps, taken a road that either does not lead at all, or only by devious and uncertain ways, to the end of his creation—the possession of God. You know this; you are authorized, either by relationship or friendship, to speak a candid word, to give a gentle rebuke, a well-meant advice. Will you, nevertheless, remain silent? Can you calmly look on, and see your brother straying farther away from his end, making rapid progress towards ruin, whilst his spiritual needs are ever on the increase?

He that shall see his brother in need, and shall shut up his bowels from him; how doth the charity of God abide in him? (1. John 3 : 17.)

These words, referring to the mere temporal, but urgent, needs of the poor, are with greater justice, applicable to the spiritual wants of our neighbor,—to that greatest danger to which an erring soul is exposed of losing her God and her All for ever.

And yet, there are but few points of Christian morality

against which so many prejudices arise in the heart of the young man, as against this charitable duty of fraternal correction !

It is not always clear, even to the very best of young men, that it is uncharitable, yea, in some cases, even unprincipled, and a sign of want of conscience, not to prevent evil when it can be prevented.

O, how many there are whose word would not be without influence, but who, either through foolish fear, or human respect, mistaken kindness, or deplorable indifference, close their mouths to those who really need a fraternal correction ! O, grave delusion ! They think to save themselves some unpleasantness, or their fellow-man some humiliation, or annoyance ; and, at the same time, they often incur a heavy responsibility, and sometimes irreparably injure others, by their silence !

It is true, the command of our Lord to prevent others' sins, is chiefly addressed to superiors : If thy brother shall offend thee, go and reprove him between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou shalt gain thy brother (Matt. 18 : 15) ; but, nevertheless, the command of fraternal charity concerns all Christians within the limits of holy prudence.

That there may be an obligation, it must be more than surmise or suspicion ; it must be something certain, a fact, or a manifest danger, into which our neighbor is about to rush

Furthermore, there must be a well-grounded hope, yes, even an assured probability, that our neighbor will profit by the fraternal correction.

Finally, I am not called upon to administer the correction, if it entail upon me, in consequence, some great damage or heavy loss.

These are the conditions which limit the obligation of fraternal correction.

True Christian charity, however, is not calculating. It must, of course, be coupled with prudence ; but our neighbor's salvation makes it ingenious. It must be forbearing, but candid ; slow, yet courageous ; patient, yet earnest and emphatic.

How many young men perish miserably, because amongst all those whom they call their friends, there are none, not even one, who has the charity and courage to say to him : Friend, take care ! if I am not mistaken, you are on the down-hill road ; it certainly looks like the wrong way, and must surely lead to destruction ! Or, friend, you grow lukewarm in the service of God ; you become more and more estranged from your holy religion ; your faith seems to be weakening. Or, again : Those ambiguous expressions displease me, my dear friend. That company will do you no good ; that society does not suit you ; that book must be cast away from you. The duties of your calling seem to have become indifferent and irksome to you. You are growing quarrelsome, haughty, arbitrary ! Enter into yourself ; —approach the Sacraments, which you have, perhaps, of late, neglected ; look for a good confessor ; refresh yourself, once more, with the Bread of Life. O, my friend ! be converted, turn over a new leaf !

To speak a word in due time, is like apples of gold on beds of silver, says the Wise Man. (Prov. 25 : 11.) Mere fear, or pre-conceived ideas, which often rest upon an under-estimate of our neighbor's heart and head, should not restrain us in fulfilling the duties of brotherly love.

Should it appear unsuitable to the occasion to say what charity would dictate, our silence does not abolish this obligation of charity.

Right order has still another means of reprimanding in individual and important cases. Our Saviour, Jesus Christ, himself specifies it, when, instructing us upon the duties we

owe to our neighbor in the prevention of enmities, he says : But if thy brother shall offend thee, go and reprove him between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou shalt gain thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, tell the Church (Matt. 18 : 15-17) ; that is, the superiors, those in authority, whose duty it is, or who are in a condition, to help us.

The trade of informing is the most hateful under the sun. To make a great noise on account of paltry things ; to annoy superiors, or offend friends, is unreasonable, childish. But, if there is question of something important ; if the good of one or more, perhaps many, immortal souls, is at stake, let no one dare to neglect a means which reason suggests, conscience commends, the conduct of noble-minded men sanctions, and repeated successes have confirmed.

O no ! young man ; do not hesitate to help your neighbor in his fall ! Reverence not thy neighbor in his fall : and refrain not no speak in the time of salvation. (Ecclus. 4 : 27, 28.)

By the love which you owe to yourself— by the wish which you cherish, and must cherish, that no one should, by an unseasonable or cowardly silence, co-operate in your eternal ruin,—speak when speech is necessary, and save what can be saved.

98.

TRUE FRIENDSHIP.

"*He that is hasty to give credit, is light of heart, and shall be lessened.*" (Ecclus. 19 : 4.)

Is there any word in our language that is more frequently misused, than the word Friendship ?

Friendship serves as a mask for self-interest ; as a veil for sensuality.

True friendship is Christian love of our neighbor, mutually existing in an increased degree, and from motives of the noblest kind, between two or more persons.

The selfish man says : I love you. But he really loves only money, recognition, favor, advantage, benefits.

The sensual man says : I love you. But he loves only the fine figure, the external form, exquisite manners, affability, sprightly humor ; he loves, perhaps, even viciousness, or, at least, the inclination to vice.

The true friend says : I love you ; and his love is based upon some spiritual quality. He loves with a pure intention, on account of some moral advantage, which he promises himself and his friend, from their mutual intercourse ; in short, he loves his neighbor as himself.

Friendship assumes the tastes and dispositions of its object.

Where an affection for any one is prompted by bad motives,—when it is a union for evil purposes,—the friendship is a bad one.

Again, if you love a person from some empty, frivolous motive, your friendship is vain.

But where your motives are high, pure, and unselfish, the friendship is a good one.

Thus, you see, the bonds which unite friends may be very different ;—sinful, frivolous, moral, yes, holy bonds.

Who is more worthy of love, than the virtuous man ?

True friendship always strives for the welfare of its beloved. Is there amongst all goods, a greater or more necessary one than virtue ?

Finally, the rule and measure of true love can only be virtue. He who offends God for the sake of a friend, puts his Creator in the back-ground, sins against reason, and the plainly-expressed commandment : Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind. (Luke 10 : 27.) We must do nothing for a friend, that is opposed to virtue.

And now, my dear young man, please calculate how many friendships are true. Deduct those friendships which are rather enmities, since the parties are mutually stumbling-blocks to each other—seduce, corrupt, and draw each other into the abyss of hell. Deduct those friendships which are only hollowness and emptiness, because every high aim and object is excluded from them,—those attachments which are but momentary, which stop at the exterior, at the accidental and the perishable. How many real friendships then remain ?

Love ! love ! the whole world talks of love ! Everybody desires to love ; all say that they love. But, how much impure, how much merely natural, how much selfish, base, adulterated dross lays claim to the sublime name of Love !

To compare a mere sensual love to a pure, ennobling friendship, is as if one would liken the dull, red, smoky

flare of a torch made of pitch, to the pure, silvery moonlight shining upon a bank of virgin snow.

Who sighs more ardently for love, than the young man? But who should be more upon his guard, than the young man?

Yes, young man, guard your heart! Be careful, lest you be caught in the net of your own eyes. (Judith 9 : 13.) Distrust your imagination. Rely not too much upon your own feelings. Wait—prove!

A good friendship is something noble and sublime; but a bad one is pernicious and destructive.

Two hearts draw near to each other; if both are corrupt, it is just as though fire and oil were mingled together, or two raging torrents rush into the same muddy bed. If one is corrupt—which is most likely to happen?—that the good young man reforms his companion, or that the latter one corrupts the good? If both are good, even then, great watchfulness and reserve are necessary; for many friendships have begun purely, but ended disgracefully. Are you so foolish as to think, that, whereas you began in the spirit, you would now be made perfect in the flesh? (Gal. 3 : 3.)

Accordingly, when there is question of friendship, do not trust every one. He that is hasty to give credit, is light of heart, and shall be lessened. (Ecclus. 19 : 4.)

Never form friendships with those in whom you have discovered any vice, or in whom you have grounds for suspicion. A friend of fools shall become like to them. (Prov. 13 : 20.)

Do not direct your attention even to those in whom you notice nothing morally amiable.

Form no friendship that is not likely to improve you. He who seeks only his own profit, advantage, or gratification in loving you, does not deserve to be loved by you, does not deserve to be called your friend. The same may

be said of him who is not solicitous for your true welfare, the salvation of your soul ; who flatters you, or is silent about your defects ; who looks to his own ends, and advances his own interests.

Adhere firmly to this principle : He who is not the friend of God, cannot be my friend. In vain, can you expect such a one to be of use to you, when he is of no use to himself ; in vain, reckon upon his fidelity, when God himself is unable to secure him as his lover and servant.

O, the rariety of true friendship in a world that is full of self-interest, malice, and the basest of sentiments !

Happy are you, if you possess one good, true friend ! A faithful friend is a strong defense : and he that hath found him, hath found a treasure. (Ecclus. 6 : 14.)

There is nothing so precious as a firm friend ; gold and silver are worthless, even when heaped up in the greatest profusion, compared to his value. Nothing can be compared to a faithful friend, and no weight of gold and silver is able to countervail the goodness of his fidelity. A faithful friend is the medicine of life and immortality : and they that fear the Lord, shall find him. He that feareth God shall likewise have good friendship : because according to him shall his friend be. (Ecclus. 6 : 15-17.) They will mutually advance in the fear of God, and remain united in heart.

If it is difficult to find a true friend, it is of great importance to retain him. Want of sincerity, distrust, jealousy, and irritability, loosen the ties of friendship, and quickly separate those who were formerly devoted friends. Without mutual self-restraint, no frienship can be lasting.

O God ! thou who hast given us hearts that require love, and, through love, are blessed, protect my innocence from all false friendships, pernicious to me, displeasing to thee ! But should it be thy holy will, that I find a true friend, bless

thou this bond of friendship, and grant that it extend to the very brink of the grave ; yes, and beyond, to the bright footstool of thy heavenly throne.

99.

LABOR.

"*Man is born to labor, and the bird to fly.*" (Job 5 : 7.)

Work—what a hard word ! Ah ! yes, work means assiduity, efforts, difficulties, sufferings.

He who labors is occupied ; but it cannot be said of him who is occupied, that he is working.

There are certain kinds of business that approach nearer to idleness than to labor.

Labor always presupposes the overcoming of some difficulties.

He labors, who earnestly and perseveringly devotes to a certain object his spiritual or bodily faculties, or perhaps both.

All work is not equally laborious. Indeed, there are some sorts of labor, which, whether on account of circumstances, or because one has acquired a certain facility in them, are not accompanied with great exertions. Notwithstanding, all labor has a greater or less opposition to meet with on the side of corrupt nature, which is strongly averse to every hard and persevering effort.

Finally, there are occupations which are fatiguing. But in this case, our physical delicacy, or the monotony of the work, have far more to do with our fatigue than the actual expenditure of strength.

But must we work? Yes, every man is subject to the law of labor. Man is born to labor, and the bird to fly. (Job 5 : 7.)

Ever since Adam rebelled against God; ever since he took forcible possession of that which the will of the Most High denied him, and audaciously usurped his Creator's rights,—creation rises up against him; and the clods of earth, as well as the spiritual soil, will yield nothing but what is forcibly wrung or wrested from it.

It is only by tears and sweat that this hard earth can be softened. Not a single fruit can be had without labor; hardly a lasting pleasure, without previous exertion. How much less can perfection, or proper cultivation of the faculties of body and soul, be arrived at, without labor?

In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy bread. (Gen. 3 : 19.) Do you hear that sentence? It was passed upon us through our first parents; and ever since, labor is the lot of man; it is a constituent part of the human destiny. He who would throw off this heaven-imposed yoke, annihilates himself, risks his true happiness, his dignity, his resemblance to God. He falls a prey to inactivity, if he permit his talents to decay, instead of developing them.

Where has anything worth talking of been accomplished, without exertion, labor, or effort? Behold the hard, toil-stained hand of the farmer, of the day-laborer, always busy providing for the future needs of himself and his family! See the traces of honest, painful toil impressed upon the features of the ingenious inventor, the celebrated artist, the powerful master of thought and speech! The conqueror mingles his blood with sweat; the man of learning

keeps the night-watches of the student diving down into the deep mines of knowledge. Real education, true culture, are inconceivable without labor, without effort, without struggle.

But, you will say : My position, my circumstances, exempt me from work. Others have labored for me ; fortune has provided for me. I am wealthy, and can live free from care. I have all that I need.

Think you so ? Dishonorable scion of worthy ancestors ! do the industry and activity of your noble sires entitle you to live in sloth and idleness ? Must not that which has been inherited, be secured and preserved by rational labor ?

But, I am still young, so young, and must I labor ! When will I be able to enjoy life ?

Young ! just on that account, the law of labor is specially applicable to you ! Your youthful strength and vigor need a sphere in which they can be made productive.

And what do you mean by enjoying life ? Acting contrary to God's ordinances ? Thwarting the plans of Providence ? Is it to fold your hands in your lap, and to idly eat what others have gathered with hard labor ? Is it to accept the promised reward, without complying with the stipulations laid down ? Is it to bury talents, which can be improved and developed only in youth—talents, which can gain a holy usury only in one's early years ?

Such views expose a young man to perish miserably in ignominious idleness and self-indulgence.

Enjoyment ! Is this life intended only for enjoyment ? Does the traveler waste his time in empty pleasures, instead of waiting until he has reached his goal, his place of rest, his home, his native land ?

Enjoyment ! Is it enjoyment to fail to reach the end of your creation, or only to reach it by a circuitous and most dangerous route ? Is it to act against conscience ? True

enjoyment is found only in the faithful discharge of duty ; it is to be sought in sacrifice, in the consciousness of having fulfilled the divine will, and in the hope of that future reward,—an everlasting rest in the bosom of God.

Enjoyment ! Did Jesus enjoy himself ? He labored and suffered, deferring rest to the next world, wishing to be able to say first : It is consummated. (John 19 : 30.) I have finished the work, heavenly Father, which thou gavest me to do. (John 17 : 4.)

Did the Saints enjoy life ? The magnanimous martyr, the unwearied Apostle, the grave penitent, the watchful virgin, the self-denying confessor, thirsting with love for God, and the desire to labor for him—how did these enjoy life !

Arouse yourself, young man ! take courage ! Go forward with active intrepidity, with tears and sweat, sowing your seed in the name of God. Surely, the day will come,—the day of joyous harvest, and superabundant reward,—when the Angels shall heap up in your barn the glorious sheaves of salvation !

And even should this day of harvest come late,—even though its dawn should shine afar off, half-dimmed by the mists of this vale of tears,—it shall appear at the end, and it shall not lie—a day of rest, a day that shall know no night an eternal Sabbath of never-ending jubilation !

How much better it is to work here, and rest hereafter, than to rest here, and afterwards, to suffer eternal torments ! Of the reprobate, it is said : And the smoke of their torments shall ascend up for ever and ever, neither have they rest, day nor night. (Apoc. 14 : 11.) Yonder above—Eternal Rest ! From henceforth now, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors. (Apoc. 14 : 13.)

Then you will say : I have labored a little, and found much rest to myself. (Ecclus. 51 : 35.) Again, will you cry out : Turn, O my soul, into thy rest : for the Lord hath

been bountiful to thee. For he hath delivered my soul from death : my eyes from tears, my feet from falling. And now, I will thank the Lord in the land of the living, of rest, and of eternal felicity ! (Ps. 114 : 7-9.)

100.

TRUE MANLINESS.

" *The just is an everlasting foundation.*" (Prov. 10 : 25.)

The winds sport with the reed, tossing it to and fro, blowing right and left.

Soft clay assumes any and every shape ; everything it comes in contact with, impresses upon it its image and seal.

All traces disappear in a moment from the shifting sand ; and even whilst you are looking on, little sandhills arise.

It is unmanly to be without that well-ordered self-reliance which yields only to reason and better information.

It is unmanly to be overpowered by every transient impression, to be led solely by one's feelings, fancy, caprice, or momentary humor—to have no fixed purpose.

It is unmanly to seize on every fresh trifle ; to carelessly abandon what we have scarcely begun ; to adhere to no purpose ; to carry out no resolutions ; to fear to face difficulties.

There are characters so wavering, that one is scarcely able to describe or portray them. Now joyous, now sad ; sometimes disposed to good ; again inclined to evil ; at one time,

impetuous, at another, hesitating, in constant agitation, in eternal waves of commotion,—their hearts remain even to themselves inexplicable riddles. Such men are tossed on the ocean of life, like ships without rudder or helm.

Do you not know that it is said of the fool that he is changed as the moon (Ecclus. 27: 12), and of the just man that he is an everlasting foundation (Prov. 10 : 25)?

Alas ! for those soft, unstable characters which are capable of being moulded at will !

Who shall discover in such a youth, the man of the future? He is full of inconsistencies. In his changeable nature, timidity sometimes yields to a spirit of enterprise ; coldness, to that of enthusiasm. He is given to violent and easily-formed attachments ! Although susceptible to virtue, yet evil impressions leave behind in his heart far deeper traces.

This inconstancy takes such a hold on some, that even their exterior—their looks, carriage, gait, speech, and gestures—bear testimony to it.

God grant that a young man of that sort may never be approached by a seducer ! What an easy prey he would find !

There are characters so flighty, that even God's grace seems inefficacious in their regard. Interior admonitions, salutary inspirations, good example,—all these, and even more, produce no effect ; for the volatile soul pays no attention to them, refuses to co-operate with them.

Pitiable characters, who can be transformed into reliable men only with great difficulty and the most indefatigable perseverance !

Yet such natures are by no means incorrigible.

No, young man ! despond not ! Earnest efforts must be successful.

First of all, be humble, and acknowledge your inconstancy. Then, endeavor to cope with it in detail.

Have the courage necessary to keep a strict watch over yourself for a time ; and, by continually renewing your good resolutions, fight against the failings you discover within you

Accustom yourself to quiet and reflection. Do not act precipitately, nor impetuously, and render an account to yourself of all that you do.

Do not permit your feelings to get the upperhand ; rather strive to become the master of your own heart.

Constancy must not degenerate into obstinacy, nor firmness, into hardness. Rather, there must be a solid foundation as to resolution and action, as to retraction and omission.

If this is essential to all your actions, young friend, it is surely most essential in regard to piety.

Nothing is more disgusting than a sentimental piety.

Nothing is further from perfection than that external piety which derives its sweetness from the feelings alone.

Nothing is more inefficacious than a piety which lives only on impressions.

Of course, there is a sensible devotion, and it is of value ; for it is a gift of the Holy Ghost, and may be made an excellent means of virtue. But there is, also, a disposition of the heart—we may call it a sort of dainty piety—which is a great drawback to virtue. It inflates the spirit, and leaves the heart empty. It seizes upon the spiritual tid-bits, while good, substantial food is wanting to the soul. It deceives, and is deceived ; insipid, selfish, tasteless, loathsome, it is nauseating to God and man, and disgusting to every one, except itself.

Do you know in what manly piety consists ? In this—that man's will (which constitutes his manliness), be employed in its full strength for God's honor and glory, in his holy service.

If a commandment of God is to be kept, it is ready to keep it.

If a good fight is to be fought for principle and virtue, it is ready for action.

If a difficulty is to be overcome, it is ready for the task.

Manly piety does not, by any means, despise or disregard external practices of piety, but it regulates them and brings them in harmony with the duties of one's station in life ; it keeps away everything extraordinary, and despising the mere appearance, and insisting more upon the interior spirit, it reaches to the heart. Proceeding to sacrifice, it labors and toils, struggles and conquers.

Does it appear to you, that too much is required of you, when you are asked to cultivate such manliness ?

Make, at least, the attempt, and begin. Lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees. (Hebr. 12 : 12.)

There are children enough, and plenty of weaklings. Be manly ; and, although young in years, put to shame those who call themselves mature, although not such either in thought or deed.

The world needs men. Not grand geniuses or plausible talkers. It is not sentimentality and dreams that will save it, but acts and deeds. It was not merely by revelations and visions that the Saints became such, but by spiritual combat, by self-denial, and overcoming the enemies of their souls.

Expect the Lord, do manfully, and let thy heart take courage, and wait thou for the Lord. (Ps. 26 : 14.)

101.

HOLY PURITY.

"*O how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory!*"
(Wisd. 4 : 1.)

O how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory! for the memory thereof is immortal : because it is known both with God and with men. When it is present, they imitate it ; and they desire it when it hath withdrawn itself : and it triumpheth crowned for ever, winning the reward of undefiled conflicts. (Wisd. 4 : 1, 2.)

Sublime praise, bestowed upon the virtue of chastity, by the Holy Ghost himself!

Heaven rejoices over chaste souls, and looks down with pleasure upon them.

God is a spirit ; and the chaste soul approaches the spiritual nature of God, by the overcoming of the flesh.

The Angels are spirits ; how much they must love mortals, who, through a fierce combat, obtain as a virtue that which they have by nature, and without any effort or struggle!

Chastity appears worthy of veneration in the eyes of men. There are none so abandoned as not to highly value that which their cowardice alone prevents them from imitating.

Every condition of life has its own chastity ; that is, to every state, according to its circumstances and duties, a certain degree of this virtue is appointed.

Youth should be chaste in every respect. It is to them more than to others, that it is said : Every one should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor. (1. Thess. 4 : 4.)

O holy prerogative of youth, to be able to practise, in its entire extent, a virtue which is the admiration of heaven and earth ! A virtue which is so admirable that, without it, all other virtues lose their brilliancy ; so sublime, that he who possesses it, may be said to equal the Angels of heaven ; so useful, that the words of Holy Writ are applicable to it : All things came to me together with her, and innumerable riches through her hands ! (Wisd. 7: 11.)

Justly, then, is chastity compared to a lily ; for this flower not only delights the eye with its brilliant whiteness, but refreshes the sense of smell by the balsamic odor which it exhales.

Exceedingly lovely is the lily of Chastity, spreading abroad its precious perfume, and refreshing the heavenly Bridegroom, of whom it is said that he feedeth among lilies. (Cant. 2: 16.) The pure young heart draws him down into its fragrant depths, so that it becomes a veritable garden of the Lord.

Chastity has the sublime prerogative of not only adorning the soul with its brilliant whiteness, but also of being, at the same time, the best ornament of the body.

Look into the clear eyes of innocence ;—what a lustre ! what quiet majesty ! How the purity of God is reflected therein ! No springtide sky shines forth as cloudlessly, no dew-drop sparkles as brightly in the rays of the morning sun, no brooklet is as clear. Thus would the Angels appear, if they would assume corporal form. O blessed, indeed, are the undefiled in the way, in the dust-covered road, of this lower earth ! (Ps. 118 : 1.)

Chastity ennobles the body. Is it not by the fragrance of

this virtue that the earthly tabernacle of the body is exalted to supernatural grace and heavenly grandeur ?

How much more does chastity exalt and ennoble the soul ! There, reason is, what it ought to be—the mistress ; the flesh is, what it must be—the subject. In this manner, right order is established and maintained. And, although the right order is not preserved without struggle and self-conquest, just herein lies an indescribable happiness. Nothing unlawful gains entrance into the heart ; no forbidden desire is granted ; there is order within, watchfulness without, and the fear of the Lord every where. O holy repose ! O sweet peace of God ! O blessed security !

How much chastity ennobles the soul, you will perceive when you reflect upon the degradation to which impurity reduces it. How it drags man down ! How it delivers him over to a disgraceful slavery ! How it puts him on a level with the brute !

O, what a contrast between the chaste, and the unchaste, soul !

Just as impurity unmans man, so chastity makes him an angel. (Matt. 22 : 30.)

There is, of course, a difference between the angel of earth and the angel of heaven, but it is only a difference in happiness, not in virtue. The chastity of the latter may be a far happier one, but the palm of heroic valor is due to the angel in the flesh. It is chastity, alone, which already in this region of death, and in this mortal life, presents us an image of that immortal glory ; it, alone, leads, here below, amidst the deafening tumult of a carnal world, a life such as is lived in those happy regions where only chaste souls surround the throne of the Lamb. Here, on earth, it enjoys in advance, a foretaste of heavenly bliss.

And, O young man, forget not that in the train of chastity there are many other virtues. If humility is the foundation

of chastity, modesty is its guardian. Chastity cannot exist without self-denial, without temperance, and self-control. Chastity cannot persevere without charity, without confidence in God, without piety.

O what a lovely group of virtues! What a delight for heaven, what a spectacle for earth, what a scandal for hell!

O blessed religion, which teaches, nourishes, and perfects so admirable and prolific a virtue! By it, thou restorest man to himself, preservest his heavenly origin, and in a purified heart, enkindlest a divine flame.

And what is the reward for this holy virtue of chastity?

From the complacency wherewith an infinitely pure God regards chaste souls, measure the grace and the reward he reserves for chastity.

From the struggle to which the acquisition of this virtue gives rise, and without which, in the majority of mankind, there is no victory,—you may form some idea of its recompense, its crown.

Truly, he that loveth cleanness of heart, shall have the king for his friend. (Prov. 22 : 11.)

Behold, how God communicates himself to chaste souls : Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God. (Matt. 5 : 8.)

See how he prefers them, drawing them close to himself, and permitting them to lean upon his bosom, like the disciple whom Jesus loved. (John 21 : 20.)

Mark, how he prepares a heaven especially for them ; in robes of gladness, and adorned with signs of victory, they follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth (Apoc. 14 : 4.)

Behold, how he teaches them to sing a new canticle, before his throne, one which none but virgins lips are able to sing. (Apoc. 14 : 3.)

O yes, whoever loves purity of heart, has the King of kings for his friend, for his confidant, for his eternal Bridegroom.

One spirit with God is he who is joined with him by self-denial and flight from all vice. (1. Cor. 6 : 17.)

O heaven of chaste souls, how lovely thou art ! What a chosen spot, a high mountain-top, an exclusive sanctuary. Who shall ascend to the mountain of the Lord ? Who shall stand in his holy place ? The innocent in hands, and clean of heart. (Ps. 23 : 3, 4.)

102.

INTERIOR RECOLLECTION.

" *My son, with all watchfulness keep thy heart, because life issueth out of it.*' (Prov. 4 : 23.)

Would you draw fruit from the admiration which the incomparable virtue of holy purity excites within you ?

Then you must act. If still innocent, uncorrupted, endeavor to preserve and secure your chastity.

If, on the other hand, you have been so unfortunate as to lose that precious treasure,—having again recovered it, endeavor to guard it henceforth by all proper means at your disposal.

Are you willing, forcibly, and energetically, to avoid all dangers ?

Then, be vigilant. Guard carefully against evil thoughts.

Should an impure image arise before your soul, an unchaste thought spring up, or a wicked desire knock at your

heart, deny them entrance, pay no heed to them, turn away your spiritual eye quickly, and direct it to something else,—something better, or, at least, something indifferent, that will divert the mind from the temptation.

Negligence in banishing evil thoughts at the very outset, is attended by bad results, and is the cause of numberless sins.

The neglected spark is easily enkindled into a great conflagration.

Many persons are careless, and watch very little over their thoughts. They almost seem to think that they are not responsible for them. What a mistake! An impure thought willfully caused, knowingly and intentionally entertained, is a grievous sin, that may, and frequently does, lead to greater sins.

You cannot call that chastity, which merely abstains from unclean deeds, and permits evil thoughts of the lowest kind to be entertained with pleasure.

Does not God penetrate into the interior of man? Is he not the searcher of hearts and reins? (Ps. 7 : 10.) Does not the degradation of so noble a portion of our being as the soul, affect our Lord most sensibly?

O, then, my son, with all watchfulness keep thy heart, because life issueth out of it (Prov. 4 : 23) ;—yea, and death too, and eternal perdition!

From the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, theft, false testimonies, and blasphemies. (Matt. 15 : 19.)

Turn from wicked, unlawful thoughts ; repress all evil desires ; and they will never blossom forth into evil deeds. Bad germs bring forth bad fruits.

103.

GUARD OVER THE SENSES.

"*Know you not that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost?*" (1. Cor. 6 : 19.)

The two most excellent guardians of chastity are bashfulness and modesty. The former removes the proximate, the latter prevents the remote, occasion of sin.

Bashfulness is that venerable priestess to whom has been committed the sanctuary of our body by God himself. With a shy timidity, she guards the holy altars; and if an unholy flame be enkindled on them, she is terrified, and immediately extinguishes it.

Modesty continually watches at the gate of the temple, and with inexorable severity denies admittance to anything that would profane or sully the consecrated spot, or disturb the holy peace which should always reign there.

Yes, young man, your body is a sanctuary. Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you? For the temple of God is holy, which you are. (1. Cor. 3 : 16, 17.) Know you not that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost, who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? (1. Cor. 6 : 19.)

Bashfulness puts the proper restraint upon indecent freedom. Alone, or in company with others, the chaste man always respects himself. There is no look, no gesture, no

action, which he does not regulate most conscientiously, according to the laws of the strictest decency and decorum. Nothing that he does, need shrink before the light of day.

This thought is always present before his mind : The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good. (Prov. 15 : 3.) Neither is there any creature invisible in his sight. (Hebr. 4 : 13.)

The immodest and sinfully-imprudent man, on the contrary, alone, and before his equals, allows himself liberties which displease the pure eye of God, grieve his holy Guardian Angel, and cause the chaste to blush, knowing that such things may lead, and alas ! only too often do lead, to the most terrible and lamentable falls '

Modesty puts a salutary restraint upon culpable, or, at least, dangerous curiosity. It is especially the eyes over which it is most anxious to keep guard.

The senses are the avenues to the heart ; and the heart becomes the rendezvous of all conceivable passions, if the carelessness and treachery of the guardian permit outside enemies to lend weapons to, and form an alliance with, the rebels within.

The immodest man allows his eyes to roam about wheresoever they will. Nothing escapes him ; he must see, hear and know everything He can deny himself nothing. He governs his senses as little as his heart ; and from the fact that his eyes and ears are always open, very often much that is dangerous enters therein. On this account, he is compolled frequently to exclaim : Woe, death is come up through our windows, it is entered into our houses, to destroy the children from without, the young men from the streets. (Jer. 9 : 21.)

Young man, you often complain of the violence of certain temptations. Are you never yourself the cause of them ? Are you always sufficiently circumspect ?

Are eye, ear, hand—in a word, is the whole exterior man, under the proper control of reason, and under the influence of that salutary thought,—the continual presence of an all-holy, an all-pure God ?

Be convinced ; your purity is in danger, the sanctuary of your body is on the verge of profanation, unless that earnest priestess, bashfulness, that conscientious guardian, modesty, protect it !

Be assured that lost innocence can never be regained, the dishonored temple never again acquire its pristine sanctity and lustre, unless it be purified by this exalted priestess ; unless she be re-instated into her former rights ; unless the guard be re-enforced at the entrance of the sanctuary, and made reliable by the most rigid discipline.

A bold, shameless, licentious young man, given up to the unbridled liberty of his senses, is anything else but chaste.

And again, a modest, bashful, prudent, reserved young man is naturally chaste.

Glorify and bear God, then, in your body. (1. Cor. 6 : 20.)

You need not be scrupulous ; it suffices to be conscientious. That which is not a sin, you must not consider as sin,—but you must avoid whatever borders on sin, or may lead to sin. It is not in your power not to be tempted ; but you can avoid a dangerous negligence, and prevent an occasion being offered to temptation.

And then, do not forget that the virtue of chastity is capable of perfection. It does not consist in an entire freedom from every temptation, but in a continually-growing inaccessibility—in a constantly-increasing hatred of all uncleanness—in a careful watch over the senses—in a more and more manful combat against flesh and blood.

As I knew that I could not otherwise be continent, except God gave it, and this was a point of wisdom to know

whose gift it was, I went to the Lord, and besought him with all my heart for strength and help. (Wisd. 8 : 21.) Lord, thou lover of pure souls, give me a mind and heart that will detest and abhor with all their strength the contemptible pleasures of the flesh !

Pierce thou my flesh with fear. (Ps. 118 : 120.) Keep thy holy presence ever before my eyes, commanding reverence, animating, and encouraging me.

O Lord of my youth, let not the tempest of water drown me, nor the deep swallow me up : and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me. (Ps. 68 : 16.)

O, rather grant me the virtue of immaculate purity, which will make me so pleasing to thee, which will give me peace of soul, and secure for me so glorious a crown hereafter ! A spotless life is old age. (Prov. 4 : 9.)

What would all human knowledge avail me in a polluted body, and of what benefit would all earthly goods be to me, without the heavenly treasure of immaculate purity ?

Behold, O my God, I am resolved, henceforward, to love this most amiable of virtues more than health and beauty, and more than earthly possessions.

I will choose her instead of light, for her light cannot be put out. (Wisd. 7 : 10.) Assist me, O Virgin of virgins, and holy Joseph, thou purest spouse of our pure Mother Mary ; thou also, my Guardian Angel ! O pray for me, all ye holy Saints, pure souls of the just made perfect, that I may persevere in the love and practice of this most beautiful virtue. Perfect thou, O Lord, my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps may not be moved. (Ps. 16 : 5.)

104.

HUMILITY.

" *Where humility is, there also is wisdom.* " (Prov. 11 : 2.)

Humility is the foundation and adornment of all other virtues.

Without humility, no virtue is firm ; without humility, no virtue is beautiful.

Without humility, every other virtue is but a sham, an illusion ; without humility, every other virtue is in peril.

The higher the edifice is to be erected, the deeper the foundations must be laid.

The more splendid the lustre of virtue, the more indispensable the crown of all virtues,—humility.

Where humility is, there also is wisdom (Prov. 11 : 2) ;—that is, in the train of humility are very grand and glorious virtues, viz. : Good judgment, piety, love, meekness, obedience, modesty.

The humble man occupies the right position towards God. From thee, O Lord ! I have received all that I have ! But if thou hast received, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received ? (1. Cor. 4 : 7.) Thou art great, and dost wonderful things : thou art God alone. (Ps. 85 : 10.) Thou art infinite, and hast existed from eternity ; I am little and insignificant. Thou hast brought me forth in time ; I am miserable and frail, dust and ashes.

The humble man does not deny his neighbor's rights. Am

I greater than my fellow-man? And even granted that I have some superior attainments, the possession of which he does not enjoy—is it not God that withheld from him that in which I glory?

The humble man does not find it difficult to obey. He willingly accepts the commands of others, fulfils them punctually, and is ready for more difficult things. The lowest place is always that which he loves, and it comforts him to see others above himself.

The humble man does not over-rate himself; on the contrary, he is convinced of his own insufficiency, and finds in that which is wanting to him, reason enough to give precedence to others. What am I by nature? what, by grace? On whom do I depend? Who has the right to dispose of me as he pleases for time and eternity?

Why, young man, are you not more humble? Because you do not know yourself.

Whence came you? Who are you? What have you done since you came into this world? Have you never done any evil? Has heaven never been witness of your disgrace? What have you done for God? Where are your good works? Where, your great, heroic deeds done for heaven?

What will, one day, become of you? The worms will feed upon your body, whilst you will be quickly forgotten. Your name will sink into oblivion, your fame will fade away like the magnificent inscription that may adorn your tomb-stone.

O beloved young friend! consider for a moment your own frailty! Be convinced that you are nothing,—nothing at all by, and of, yourself.

What pride can hold out against this reflection? What can be more humiliating than this thought? Does it make you low-spirited? I hope not. Your very greatness lies

in this : Not to have any greatness without him who, alone, is all Greatness.

Humility is most becoming a young man.

Humility makes a young man amiable ; for humility is the mother of simplicity and modesty.

Humility preserves purity ; for the humble man avoids dangerous occasions, knowing well his own weakness. He makes use of the means which are necessary for the protection of this most delicate of all virtues. On the contrary where pride is, there is reproach. Pride goes before destruction, and paves the road to the bottomless abyss of immorality.

Humility is a help for the acquisition of science ; for it is docile, mistrusts itself, and gladly accepts advice and guidance.

Humility is generous-hearted ; it is fit for great deeds, and undertakes difficult things. Who does not seek himself, is capable of greater sacrifices, than he who is confined within the narrow limits of egotism.

Humility gives peace, for it knows not envy, nor hatred ; neither does it stir up revenge.

Humility is always happy ; no injustice is ever done to it ; it is not astonished at adversity ; it does not murmur nor complain ; it desponds not, but hopes, trusts, and perseveres—rejoices that God's honor is increased by its humiliations, and is ready for still greater sacrifices. No blow is so heavy, that it may not bear it patiently ; it kisses the hand that strikes, being aware that it is the hand of the most loving, just, and tender of Fathers.

Humility is not learned by mere reflection, or acquired by meditating upon its lowliness.

Practice is the best teacher of this virtue.

Lay aside all solicitude about dress, gait, carriage, and speech. Be simple and natural, manly and upright.

Banish all self-complacent thoughts, reminiscences, plans, wishes, desires.

Do not be egotistic, and talk constantly of yourself ; desire not to be praised, and be not cast down under reproof.

Endeavor in all things to advance God's honor and glory ; and consider it a sacrilege, a robbery, to wind the laurels of fame around your own head.

Remain calm in the midst of vexations ; keep silent when irritated ; and do not exaggerate the injustice or injury which you may have suffered at the hands of another.

Pray often for humility—a virtue which even heaven itself admired in Mary, the Blessed Mother of God, and which our Lord rewarded by the highest dignity to which it was possible for a mortal to attain.

Above all, learn humility from Jesus Christ, who so emphatically exhorts us to learn of him to be meek and humble of heart. (Matt. 10 : 29.)

O Humility ! hidden, but, at the same time, and for that very reason, most precious virtue ! God grant that I may always prize thee more and more, labor with untiring zeal to gain thee, and make thee, thenceforth, the fundamental virtue of my heart.

105.

HUMILITY EXALTS.

"*Humiliation followeth the proud; and glory shall uphold the humble of spirit.*" (Prov. 29 : 23.)

Humility degrades? What a foolish notion! It is the echo of that bold, audacious cry that once resounded in heaven : I will ascend above the height of the clouds ; I will be like the Most High. (Is. 14 : 14.)

Lying word! the expression of that cowardly self-love, which finds it a pain and a trouble to aspire to this most glorious of all Christian virtues. No, young man, just the reverse : Humility does not degrade, but exalts, man. The Holy Ghost himself has said it : Humiliation followeth the proud, and glory shall uphold the humble of spirit.

Of course, you must not confound humility with pusillanimity, with timidity, with a certain kind of narrow-mindedness.

Humility—that humility which Jesus has taught and which the Saints practised, makes us see, in the light of faith, our own nothingness, our own unutterable misery. This realization fills us with a holy contempt of ourselves. The thought : I am nothing of myself, and possess nothing,—must necessarily lead me in all things to give honor to God alone, and to attach no importance to anything except to that which he esteems as great and honorable.

How indifferent to me, says the humble man, are all these

things which the world calls grand and glorious! Is it not all vanity? Is there any greatness except in God? Did Jesus, during his earthly life, seek any other?

And, further says the humble man, why should I despise any one of my fellow-men, because he lacks certain brilliant qualities which the world esteems highly? Is it not God who denies them to him,—perhaps in order to give him something better and more precious? And if my neighbor make a splendid appearance, if he be rich, and revel in pleasures, I do not envy him his good fortune. I am willing to be last and forgotten by all; I know what makes me great: my lowliness, if I rightly make use of it.

The humble man relies upon God; in him, alone, he trusts. In the power of God, he believes himself capable of doing everything, because he relies on Omnipotence itself. I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me. (Phil. 4: 13.)

Behold, this is humility; and shall such be regarded as degradation?

Humility is truth, and truth is never without greatness.

Humility is power in God; and power and God's strength are something great.

Yes, humility makes great. It ennobles the soul, because it makes her remain conscious of her high extraction from God, and of her honorable dependence on him.

It restores to the soul her true, supernatural grandeur, by divesting her of her borrowed, earthly greatness. It gives her reality instead of appearance; the fruit instead of the external peel or rind; a real diamond instead of a worthless imitation.

Humility enlarges the heart. The temporal barriers give way, human prejudices fall, and heavenly purposes open a path for themselves.

Humility makes fearless. The Lord is my light and my

salvation ; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the protector of my life : of whom shall I be afraid ? If armies in camp should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear. If a battle should rise up against me, in this, will I be confident. (Ps. 26 : 1-3.)

Humility is enterprising. Earthly obstacles it counts as nothing. Foolish timidity, and vain self-confidence give place to holy daring, immovable confidence in God. Forward—Onward, for the greater honor and glory of God ! exclaims courageous Humility ; nothing that is not God, can impede my course ; he himself lends me his omnipotence and his name. Hereby I shall surmount all obstacles. By thee I shall be delivered from temptations, and through my God, I shall go over a wall. (Ps. 17 : 30.)

Do you know who is humbled, degraded—who is little, low, mean, insignificant, and miserable ? It is the proud man.

He crawls, he twists, he makes a thousand servile attempts to gain the favor of men. How often does he not have recourse to the most dishonorable of means to supplant a rival ! Deceit, calumny, treachery, violence,—he will stop at nothing. How full of himself he is ! How self-complacently he walks, how pompously he looks, and talks ! How ostentatious he is ! How he always manages to make himself prominent ! What store he sets in titles, etiquette, and distinctions ! How unhappy he is when his honor is attacked —if an insult or slight is offered to him, or if everything does not go according to his wishes !

O, what a deplorable condition is this ! Do you call this greatness ?

The humble man knows nothing of all these things ; he is above such petty weaknesses, and looks with pity upon those tortured slaves of mistaken honor.

Meanwhile, people cannot help honoring, at least inte-

riorly, him who is really humble, who does not seek his own, but renounces all earthly praise.

And what honor awaits the humble man hereafter? Is there even one among the elect of heaven who was not humble during his sojourn upon earth? O no! Heaven does not belong to the proud. Narrow is the gate that leadeth to life (Matt. 7 : 14), and those who are puffed up with pride, can never pass through it.

Thus the words of Christ are fulfilled: Every one that exalteth himself, shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted. (Luke 18 : 14.)

106.

CHEERFULNESS.

"*A joyful mind maketh age flourishing: a sorrowful spirit drieth up the bones.*" (Prov. 17 : 22.)

There is a sadness which is bad, which offends God, repulses our neighbor, torments itself, checks virtue, and promotes vice.

Again, there is a sadness which is good, a sadness unto salvation. It may appear bitter, but it is not without consolation. It is like a thunder-storm whose clouds gradually dissolve into fruitful rain, and through whose bright rifts, the clear blue sky may be seen beyond.

The sadness of passion is bitter, comfortless, restless, violent; it depresses the mind, and easily degenerates into perfect chaos and despair. It frequently resembles the

ocean, whose frothing billows dash up heavenward, crash and break, rushing back into the abyss, in order to again renew their foaming assault upon the strand.

There is also a certain natural sadness. It is the melancholy of an over-sensitive mind, which every trifle overwhelms with gloomy feelings. Sadness degenerates into darkness, the will grows lame, and the imagination conjures up a hundred shadowy evils.

This sort of melancholy is very frequently met with among the young people of our times. What? you say—when our young folks are so full of life and merriment, and their modes of amusement are so varied and multiplied? Just therein is the very root of the evil. The desires of youth are too manifold; the gratification afforded, too transient; the contrasts, too strong; the transitions, too violent; the sudden emptiness breaks upon them with too destructive a shock.

Add to this the effeminate education in vogue in certain circles, the early introduction into society, and the repeated and excessive excitement of the senses; consider, also, the many necessities to which even the young people of our days accustom themselves from childhood, and which seem almost indispensable to their maturer years;—and the phenomena are easily explained.

Where will you find strong characters among our modern young men? Do not the great majority yield themselves without resistance to every passing impression, and deliver themselves over to exaggerated fancies and exuberant feelings, thus wasting their best powers, and rendering themselves unfit for every-day life? Truly, they verify the words of the Holy Ghost: The sadness of the heart is every plague. (Ecclus. 25 : 17.) And again: As a moth doth by a garment, and a worm by the wood, so the sadness of man consumeth the heart. (Prov. 25 : 20.)

Yes, sadness hath killed many, and there is no profit in it. (Ecclus. 30 : 25.)

Self-control and union with God are the sole means of exorcising a gloomy spirit.

True cheerfulness, the chief characteristic of a virtuous young man, is opposed to all this darkness and melancholy.

Cheerfulness is the special prerogative of virtue. No one has a right to be merry and cheerful, but he who can presume to be in the love and friendship of God. Let the slave of sin tremble, let the enemy of God lament, and shudder at the thought of hell, which is yawning under his feet !

True cheerfulness has for its foundation, purity of heart. It arises from the comforting assurance : I am the friend of God.

True cheerfulness is rooted in the sweet consoling reflection : God is my Father ; he loves me, he provides for me, he ordains all that happens to me, and orders it all for the best.

True cheerfulness finds its nourishment in the blessed food which religion alone furnishes it. The thought of the omnipresent God refreshes the heart ; the fulness of grace, which the Church offers us, animates our courage, and the hope of a blissful eternity fills the soul with holy joy.

Cheerfulness, therefore, means peace. No mists envelop the cheerful spirit ; even if clouds pass over it, they are surely not so dense, but that the sunny beams of refreshing confidence in God may break through and illumine the soul.

Cheerfulness manifests itself in the whole outer man.

The happy, peaceful heart is depicted in the features. The countenance is serene, the eye bright, the brow clear, the carriage sure, the gait quick and lively.

Cheerfulness, however, is not devoid of gravity and earnestness, when and where circumstances demand ; but it is a gentle earnestness, divested of all harshness and bitterness, and limited by a prudent sweetness.

Cheerfulness loves to communicate itself to others. The cheerful man is accessible, affable, friendly. In his hands the darts of fun and good humor are not weapons that wound, but rather airy arrows whose flight amuses and delights the listeners.

Cheerfulness is not noisy or boisterous. As it proceeds from the equanimity of a well-ordered soul, so it manifests itself without any disorder. This is the chief characteristic of genuine cheerfulness : To possess itself in peace, and to rejoice therein.

A joyful mind maketh age flourishing : a sorrowful spirit drieth up the bones. (Prov. 17 : 22.) It is becoming to youth to cultivate cheerfulness, that it may be a blooming age in name and in reality.

Avoid sin, and especially, impurity. By so doing, you have removed the greatest obstacle to true and lasting cheerfulness.

Keep your passions in check, especially your predominant passion, if you would overcome the chief disturber of your heart's repose.

Be pious, and cling to God—and you have opened for yourself the most excellent fountain of joy and consolation.

O yes, the fear of the Lord shall delight the heart, shall give joy, and gladness, and length of days. (Ecclus. 1 : 12.)

107.

RECREATIONS.

"*Take thy pastime ; and do what thou hast a mind, but not in sins or proud speech.*" (Ecclus. 32 : 15, 16.)

The man who performs with fidelity, the earnest duties of his station in life, needs, from time to time, some innocent relaxation.

The strongest string snaps, if kept too long stretched.

To observe the golden mean is the height of wisdom.

Recreation pleases nature, whilst the earnestness of labor and duty is onerous to it. Hence, we are naturally only too much inclined to go to excess, both as to the manner and the measure of amusement.

This is especially the case with the young man, who looks at life so little from its serious side. His fickle-mindedness draws him away from the strait path of duty, throws himself into the arms of pleasure, and seeks therein his sole gratification.

How sad is that seed-time when one sows naught save trifles and pastimes, jests and wantonness ! Do you not know that it is written that only they that sow in tears shall reap in joy ? (Ps. 125 : 5.)

Act reasonably, young man ; learn how to recreate yourself, innocently and moderately.

Yes, interrupt your serious occupations sometimes ; take your pastime, and do what thou hast a mind, but not in sins or proud speech. (Ecclus. 32 : 15, 16.)

First of all, the motive of your recreations and games must be a good one. This motive is no other than, to better fit yourself for the labor and the duty of your state of life. Any sort of work suffers through long-continued and uninterrupted application. Therefore, rest from your work occasionally, and gain strength for new efforts.

Let your recreations and games be innocent.

Fly from whatever could injure your soul.

Avoid all that inordinately excites you, or gives an impetus to your passions.

Shun whatever might become the occasion of uncharitableness, dispute, anger, or discord.

Let not your amusements so disturb your mind that it can return to work or prayer only with the greatest difficulty.

Fly all that breeds envy, covetousness, impatience, vanity, desire of revenge.

Avoid whatever might prove an occasion of inordinate attachment, and afterwards give rise to the worst results.

Do not gamble ; it is dangerous, it gets you into trouble. You become accountable to God for wasting your earthly substance, and depriving the poor of their rightful portion. If you play for money, stake no more than you dare lose without violating your conscience, betraying higher duties giving scandal, and committing sin.

When at play, control yourself. Be not capricious, nor bitter. If you win, excite not your opponents by words or gestures of triumph ; if you lose, do not lose, at the same time, your equanimity and serenity. It is a double gain when one, by his moderation and patience, wins at play the esteem and love of his companions.

A quarrelsome fellow is the plague-spot of recreations ; an amiable, even-tempered young gentleman is something very rare ; such a one shows great self-control and beautiful gifts of heart and mind.

If you return from play calmly and tranquilly, without losing your self-control, though you should have lost pecuniarily, you have won in the highest point of view.

Your amusements should not be excessive in point of time ; otherwise, they fail in the very thing which alone renders recreation safe and salutary.

Through excess, play becomes a wearing occupation. We are not refreshed by immoderate recreations. Pursued too long, they fatigue, irritate, and put us out of humor. One finds it necessary to rest even from play, since it has then ceased to prove a refreshment after work.

Excessive attachment to amusement is culpable. Young people are easily carried off by this passion for continual recreation. An inordinate desire to win at play, causes loss of time, takes away the relish and taste for more serious things, begets dislike for work, and fills the mind with nonensical, and even improper, thoughts.

A spiritual writer says : Work, prayer, food, sleep, and play are the five fingers of our hand ; but the last and least of them is play. He who knows how to use these fingers properly, corresponds most perfectly with the holy designs of an infinitely good and wise Providence.

You perceive now, O young man, what reason and religion advise, in regard to recreations, and more especially in regard to play.

Every recreation must be purchased with work ; then, only, it is merited ; then, only, it is relished. He who does not labor in the service of duty, has no right to recreations ; for he who has no need of recovering wasted strength, does not need relaxations.

He who spends all his time in play, or who plays more than he works, is a spendthrift, yea, a robber. He appropriates to himself what is not due, what does not belong to him ; he squanders the most precious of all things,—time.

To live only for enjoyment, to add play to play, pleasure to pleasure, is unworthy of man, who is born for something greater and higher.

To grant one's self recreation in order to live, in order to better correspond to one's serious vocation or calling, to be fresher for work, and stronger for grave and important action, is reasonable, sanctioned by God, and offers even to virtue, manifold inducements to, and occasions of, progress and merit.

Rejoice, therefore, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart be in that which is good in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes : and know that for all these God will bring thee into judgment (Eccles. 11 : 9.)

108.

POLITENESS OF MANNERS.

" *The attire of the body, and the laughter of the teeth, and the gait of the man, show what he is.*" (Ecclus. 19 : 27.)

There is a certain sort of harsh, repellent virtue, and it may be that some souls are called to it.

There is also a pleasant sort of virtue to whose influence it must be credited, if the kingdom of good is extended, here below.

How beautifully politeness becomes a well-educated young man ! How it increases his amiability, and elevates his morally good qualities, making them worthy of imitation !

If virtue is the precious pearl, politeness of manners is the artistic setting, which delights the eye, and enhances the value of the jewel.

oliteness and virtue are most intimately connected. Both spring from a common root,—self-denial ; both have a common enemy,—selfishness.

The worldling, in order to please the world, does many things that are not easy, nor to his taste. He moulds himself into certain forms, abandons views and inclinations that are near and dear to him, puts restraints upon himself, bears insults, overlooks slights, keeps back what he would like to say, and speaks when he would rather remain silent. He is determined to please every one, no matter at what cost ; he must maintain his position, he must rise. Hence, for a miserable pittance or reward, he becomes the inglorious victim of vanity, selfishness, and human respect.

Not so with the virtuous man. He, too, makes sacrifices, even a sacrifice of himself, but for the love of God, for a divine reward. Without sacrificing his conscience (which belongs to a higher Lord), he endeavors in all other things to become all to all.

He restricts himself for the sake of others, accommodates himself to their tastes, is indulgent where he can be, is reserved, with all liberty, and is free without offending any one ; he praises what is praiseworthy, and knows how to soften a necessary rebuke by sympathy and friendly interest. Cheerful without excess, he is obliging, affable, polite, without cringing ; modest with superiors, benign with his equals, and condescending to inferiors.

O the power of love ! O holy violence of self-denial !

Shall not such politeness, arising from such motives, and purchased at the price of such sacrifices, bear on its brows the stamp of genuine virtue ?

Is it not as far removed as heaven is from earth, from

that artificial white-wash, from that smooth veneering, that chills us with its deadly coldness, because it originates from loveless, selfish hearts, and is destitute of all heavenly warmth and unction ?

Politeness and urbanity, high-toned culture and courtesy, have value only as far as they proceed from, and aim at, charity. If their source is true self-denial ; if they rest upon the esteem of the neighbor, as faith teaches us, they are laudable, meritorious, and pleasing to God.

The eulogy or example of a polite companion, or of an educated man of the world, is neither a sufficient, nor worthy, motive for cultivating that which, only through faith, is raised from a mere social to a Christian virtue.

Just because genuine politeness originates from charity, and promotes charity, it should be no stranger to you, young man, no matter what vocation or state of life you may embrace. Learn it for God's sake, by self-observation and the observation of other really educated and refined persons.

You will avoid many faults against charity, if you remove what is contrary to good manners. Yes, good manners will even be to your own gain, because through their influence, you will learn to treat yourself with a kind of veneration.

Consider it not below your dignity to pay attention to courtesy even in minor things. Dress, carriage, looks, gestures, gait, speech,—nothing is to be overlooked.

Even Holy Writ—that most solemn and sacred of all monitors—disdains not to lay down rules of conduct, which are always rules of wisdom, as well as rules of charity. Though these, in general, refer to the whole outward man, they, in particular, regard the most abused of all our instruments of sense,—the tongue.

A man is known by his look, and a wise man, when thou meetest him, is known by his countenance. For the attire

of the body, and the laughter of the teeth, and the gait of the man, show what he is (Ecclus. 19 : 26, 27.)

The eyes of fools are in the ends of the earth. (Prov. 17 : 24.)

The heart of fools is in their mouth, and the mouth of wise men is in their heart. (Ecclus. 21 : 29.)

A wise man will hold his peace till he see opportunity, but a babbler, and a fool, will regard no time. (Ecclus. 20 : 7.)

He that answereth before he heareth, showeth himself to be a fool, and worthy of confusion. (Prov. 18 : 13.)

He that uses many words, shall hurt his own soul. (Ecclus. 20 : 8.)

A fool lifteth up his voice in laughter, but a wise man will scarcely laugh low to himself. (Ecclus. 21 : 23.)

It is the folly of a man to hearken at the door, and a wise man will be grieved with the disgrace. (Ecclus. 21 : 27.

A fool will peep through the window into the house, but he that is well taught will stand without. (Ecclus. 21 : 6.)

Young man, scarcely speak in thy own cause. If thou be asked twice, let thy answer be short. In many things, be as if thou wert ignorant ; and hear in silence, and without seeking. In the company of great men take not upon thee, and when the ancients are present, speak not much. (Ecclus. 32 : 10-13.)

If thou sittest amongst many, reach not thy hand out first of all : and be not the first to ask for a drink. (Ecclus. 31 : 21.)

Say not : There are many things that are upon it. Remember that a wicked eye is evil. (Ecclus. 31 : 13, 14.)

Be not hasty in a feast. Use as a frugal man, the things that are set before thee. (Ecclus. 31 : 17-19.)

Leave off first, for manners' sake, and exceed not, lest thou offend. (Ecclus. 31 : 20.)

Do you, perhaps, believe that good manners or courtesy were a matter of indifference to the Saviour of the world?

Behold the picture which the ancient Prophets presented of the Messias!—

He shall not cry; neither shall his voice be heard abroad. The bruised reed he shall not break, and the smoking flax he shall not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not be sad nor troublesome. (Is. 42 : 2-4.)

If any man will take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall force thee to go one mile, go with him other two. Give to him that asketh of thee, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not away. (Matt. 5 : 41-42.)

When thou art invited to a wedding, sit not down in the highest place (Luke 14 : 8); because every one that exalteth himself, shall be humbled. (Luke 14 : 11.)

Have no strife amongst you as to which shall be first; for the great ones of earth do this. He who is the greatest among you, let him be as the least: and he that is leader, as he that serveth. (Luke 22 : 26.)

Be natural as children. (Matt. 18 : 3.) Be wise as serpents, and simple as doves. (Matt. 10 : 16.)

If any man strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. (Matt. 5 : 39.)

And did not the Apostles teach the same?

Render to all their dues: fear, to whom fear, honor, to whom honor. (Rom. 13 : 7.)

Communicating to the necessities of the saints, pursuing hospitality. (Rom. 12 : 13.)

Rejoice with them that rejoice; weep with them that weep. (Rom. 12 : 15.)

If it be possible, as much as you can, have peace with all men. (Rom. 12 : 18.)

Let your modesty be known to all men (Phil. 4 : 5), that all may be edified by your good conduct.

We are a spectacle to the world, to Angels, and to men. (1. Cor. 4 : 9.)

How easily may courteous manners, ennobled by a modest reserve, dispel the popular prejudice against virtue, and awaken in the rudest and most vicious mind, a strong desire to imitate him who is none the less a Christian because he is a polished gentleman !

109.

OUR DAILY ACTIONS.

"*In all thy works, keep the pre-eminence.*" (Ecclus. 33 : 23.)

Our life is a chain—either longer or shorter ; its last link unites time with eternity.

Action is added to action, until, finally, character becomes settled and solidified, and all things are stamped with the seal of stability.

Our individual actions may be either of gold, silver, lead, glass, or straw. With some, the chain of life is altogether of precious metal ; with others, it is an alloy of gold silver, lead, glass, or straw.

How differently may two men perform the same action ! Here, heavenly intentions ; there, solely of the earth, earthy.

Here, only God, or, at least, a preference for God, before and above all else ; there, all for myself ; the mighty Ego always uppermost.

Here, the beginning, progress, and end of the action, good; there, either the beginning, progress, or end (or, perhaps, all three), tainted, vitiated, valueless before God.

Here, prudent choice, measure, order ; there, caprice, wilfulness, aimlessness, want of system.

An opportunity for the performance of extraordinary actions seldom arises ; hence, it is the more foolish not to bring our daily, ever-recurring actions into relation to God, to fail to perform them with fervor and alacrity, and to enliven them to the end with the warm breath of love.

Before God, there are, of and by themselves, neither great nor small actions.

The most insignificant action, if it bear upon it the stamp of the divine complacency—if it be done for God, and with God,—becomes great, infinitely great, and exceedingly precious.

On the contrary, let a deed be ever so grand, heroic and astonishing, if it be not referred to God—if self-will be its source, self-will its guide and end,—it is small, miserable, and, like all merely human things, vain, valueless, unprofitable.

It is the supernatural intention which gives the action a sort of divine nature ; and, consequently, imparts to it, greatness, dignity, and sublimity, in an almost infinite degree.

Rising from bed, and retiring to rest ; study, recreation, intercourse with others, eating, drinking, clothing ourselves,

— all may be elevated and ennobled, made grand and meritorious, if we imprint thereon the seal of love, of sacrifice, of fervor, of obedience, and order.

To what shall we compare a life replete with actions that are not referred to God,—to him who is our end and aim, whom we are to serve here, and in whom we are to rest hereafter ?

Is it not a chain whose links are of straw and stubble, only fit to be burned, rather than of gold and silver, binding us for ever to the very heart of God ?

O short epitome of infinite holiness : Do what you do ! Whatever you do, do it for, and with, God, in the right manner, and with a pure intention. All for the greater honor and glory of God !

Yes, young man, learn to act solidly, and with noble aims. Aspire to something higher than to be a common, ordinary, every-day man, a mere selfish, heartless, machine. In all thy works, keep the pre-eminence. (Ecclus. 33 : 23.)

It may be hard to continue doing the old, oft-recurring work with ever-renewed fervor ; yet, true love of God never grows old ! O Beauty ever ancient, ever new !

The heavens show forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the work of his hands. (Ps. 18 : 2.) The celestial bodies do nothing new, nothing that they have not done for thousands of years. But they fulfil the will of God, they glorify God, they do what they do, in a perfect manner. Imitate them ; go and do likewise.

From everlasting to everlasting, the blessed in heaven continue to chant their Holy, holy, holy ! and ever anew intone their Alleluias. Whilst, thereby, they honor God, they share among themselves the plenitude of happiness, communicated to them as their infinite reward. Imitate them in their perseverance, as well as in the perfection of their actions.

Is it necessary to live long, in order to live well and meritoriously ?

Being made perfect in a short space, he has fulfilled a long time (Wisd. 4 : 13), is said of the righteous young man.

Our days may thus be full ; full days shall be found in them (Ps. 72 : 10), if they be filled with actions which God wills, performed in the manner that he wills.

And should you live long, what riches may you not amass, if now, as a young man, you learn to live well, and begin to fill your days to overflowing with the precious treasures of good works !

110.

A GOOD INTENTION.

"*For whom do I labor, and defraud my soul of good things ?*" (Eccles. 4 : 8.)

Do you know the magical wand that has the power of changing even the most trifling of our actions into precious gems ?

God wills it, and to him be it offered, says the virtuous man, when he begins a work ; and he says it with such a lively faith, that the entire action is penetrated with its spirit, as it were, stripped of its earthly, and invested with a supernatural, character, and is honored with the dignity of being deposited as a merit in the treasury of heaven.

There shall not enter into heaven anything defiled (Apoc. 21 : 27) ; that means, that not only direct evil is excluded from the kingdom of God, but all that does not bear the stamp of holiness—that has not been consecrated by a pure intention.

All that we do, belongs most justly to God. As we are here upon earth for no other purpose than to know, to praise, to love, and to serve him ; so all that goes to fill up our lives must tend to him, as our first Beginning, and our last End.

I am Alpha, and Omega, the first, and the last, the beginning, and the end (Apoc. 22 : 13) ; and as everything proceeds from God, it must lead back to him. The straighter the arrow flies to the mark, the more perfect is the action.

In describing a perfect circle with a compass, you must keep one foot of the compass firmly and immovably fixed on a certain point. Work and intention are the two feet of the compass ; a work is so much more perfect, the more unalterably the intention is fixed upon God.

A good intention is called actual, when it is really and explicitly awakened in the soul during the performance of the action, and when the person, in what he does, really thinks of God as the end of his action.

To the honor and glory of God ! O heavenly watchword, resounding throughout this valley of tears, and arousing us from the miserable, engrossing cares of this earthly life ! thou remindest us of our high destiny. Let, then, thine echoes sound without intermission in our ears ; become thou the holy battle-cry of every hour, of every action, of every mundane struggle !

The virtual intention is nothing else than the actual one continuing in its effect. The thought of God, as such, has ceased, but the intention is continuous. I still act by virtue of my first resolution, to do all for God. I have not.

either explicitly or implicitly, retracted my intention or purpose ; the arrow is still flying straight to the mark.

You now perceive what is most safe, or, at least, most meritorious in regard to purity of intention. The virtual intention is sufficient, but the actual is more efficacious.

And now, you will also see how necessary it is to give those actions which we call indifferent, a heavenward tendency.

Such indifferent actions have, according to their nature, nothing to do with the supernatural end, for which we are created. Therefore, that which is wanting in them, must be supplemented by the intention.

Nothing is good or meritorious except what is conducive to our eternal salvation. If we cannot merit even by our good works,—if they proceed not from a high, supernatural motive,—how much less can that become a merit which is morally indifferent in itself ?

Our lives consist only too much of such actions, which, in, and of, themselves, are neither good nor bad. If they do not lead back to God by a pure intention ; if they are not done with reference to God ; if they have no supernatural tendency,—much, very much, of our life is lost ; and of the thousands and thousands of days which pass away in one's life, there remain, perhaps, only a few hours which really count for heaven ! For whom do I labor, and defraud my soul of good things ? (Eccles. 4 : 8.)

Ask yourself seriously this question of the Wise Man, you who are utterly devoid of all consciousness of a higher life,—who do not seem to comprehend that, where there is no virtuous motive, there can be no virtuous action. The sincere answer thereto will be most salutary to you. You do, indeed, defraud your soul of her reward, when you thus deprive her of everlasting treasures.

O young man, begin, at last, to tend to higher things.

The longer the life may be that is still before you, the more important it is to exchange its years for a happy eternity. What a treasure of merits can he lay up for himself, who from his earliest youth, lives, works, toils, and suffers, for, and with, God !

Be not satisfied with offering to God all the actions of the day at your morning prayer ; renew this good intention several times during the day, especially at the beginning of any important action, or of such as, being pleasing to nature, may more easily lead to the gratification of your lower passions.

Yes, whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do ; do all things for the glory of God. (1. Cor. 10 : 31.) All whatsoever you do in word or in work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. (Col. 3 : 17.)

Be on your guard, especially, lest miserable selfishness corrupt you actions. It is like the worm which hides in the choicest fruits, disfiguring and gnawing them, until it appropriates to itself the best of the juice and pulp.

Is human praise the goal of your ambition ? Are you solicitous to shine, to outdo others, or to push them (as the saying is) to the wall ?

Do you seek knowledge only for its own sake, or for the active exercise of your faculties ? Are your efforts solely directed to the maintenance of your future existence, to bread-winning, or position ?

Deceived and deluded being that you are ! Time is past—gone—and nothing is done for eternity ! What then doth it profit that you labored for the wind ? (Eccles. 5 : 15.) O, raise up your hearts ! Sursum corda. Why not do all for God ? Do you prefer to be one of those of whom it shall one day be said : They have already received their reward ? (Matt. 6 : 2.)

111.

THE FIRST MOMENTS OF THE DAY.

"*That it might be known to all that we ought to prevent the sun to bless thee, and adore thee at the dawning of the light.*" (Wisd. 16 : 28.)

O God, my God, to thee do I watch at break of day! (Ps. 62 : 2.) How heartily I thank thee for this new day! How I long to pass all my life in a manner well-pleasing to thee!

It is very important, young man, that you dedicate your first waking moments to the Lord, in this, or some similar, manner. O, suffer nothing then to enter your heart before God! Worldly affairs, temporal concerns, will soon enough claim your attention ; offer up as a welcome sacrifice to your heavenly Benefactor, at least, the firstlings of the day.

Was not the refreshing repose of the past night a gift of God?

Is not this new lease of life, this new space of time, another gift of God?

Well, then, show your appreciation of these benefits.

He who is distracted and dissipated in mind at awaking, runs a great risk of remaining all day long in some dangerous condition.

Above all things, beware of profaning the day by indolence at its very beginning. The morning hour has gold in

its mouth. Early rising is meritorious, and profitable for the duties of your state of life.

When the appointed hour has come, be manly, rouse yourself, and get up. As the door turneth upon its hinges, so doth the slothful man upon his bed. (Prov. 26 : 14.) Not so, you ; make the sacrifice quickly and magnanimously. A victory early in the morning is a good omen for the whole after-day.

When you have risen, with pious thoughts or aspirations, and dressed with all modesty,—kneel down and perform your first and most urgent business of the day,—your morning prayers. If you are in the habit of hearing Mass immediately after rising, you may postpone these until you present yourself at the holy Sacrifice.

The omission of morning prayers is equivalent to a bad day.

Is God not worthy of a salutation in the morning ? Are the gifts of God of no value to you ? You accustom yourself to take them from his hands without a sign of acknowledgment, or a word of thanks, as if it were a matter of course that he must give them to you !

No, it is not a matter of course. At this very hour wherein you arise to begin your day's work, your friends might have found you lying cold and lifeless on your bed. The past night might have been your last.

Therefore, return thanks to God for having lengthened your life, even by another day, and for having given you another lease of time, in which to work out your salvation, and acquire fresh merits for heaven.—O Lord, I thank thee for preserving me the past night, and for granting me a new time of grace !

Moreover, you must also ask God's blessing and protection for the ensuing day. Each day may bring to you enough of evil,—dangers of soul and body,—mishaps, suffer-

ings, troubles, bitterness, and hardships of every sort. You need graces,—many and great, from day to day; but they must be asked for.—O Lord! assist and protect me!

Recommend to God all your concerns, all your thoughts, words and actions.—To thee, O Lord, I dedicate all that this day may bring to me of sorrow or of joy,—all my thoughts and words, my occupations and labors, my sufferings and combats. All for thy greater honor and glory

Then, briefly renew your good resolutions, laying them at the feet of the Lord. Make one in particular, against the fault you most desire to rid yourself of: O Lord, with thy help, I will take pains to-day to live so as to please thee; O, give me thy holy grace, without which I can do nothing!

It would be very well for you to unite a short meditation with your morning prayer.

Can there be a more suitable time for prayer than the morning? As yet, the thousand-and-one worldly cares have not entered the heart, nor has it been forced and dragged in a hundred different directions.

You are, as yet, undisturbed; you belong to yourself

The imagination, too, has not yet been filled with the various objects of which it is the sport all day long.

Why do you think the Israelites were ordered to gather the Manna before sunrise? (The heavenly bread melted away with the first ray of the sun.) That it might be known to all, that we ought to prevent the sun to bless thee, and adore thee at the dawning of the light. (Wisd. 16: 28.)

Hence, the just man will give his heart to resort early to the Lord, that made him, and he will pray in the sight of the Most High. (Ecclus. 39: 6.)

Tell me, O negligent young man, who are so indifferent to God at your first awaking, what can you expect from a day so begun? Can the blessing of God rest upon your

daily work, from whose commencement you have, as it were, excluded him ?

Has foolish culture so blinded you as to neglect a work of justice to the Sovereign Majesty itself ?

Is it pride that withholds you from bending the knee, and paying that homage, which no creature dare refuse to its Lord and Creator ?

Does sloth induce you to neglect the exercise of a devotion which ancient Christian usage has long since sanctified and sanctioned, and which, in your tender years, you were surely trained to practise by a good and pious mother ?

O, begin, again, to say your morning prayers regularly !

Begin, once more, to do your duty with fervor, with recollection, truly in the spirit of faith.

Even should your morning prayers be short, say them the more fervently and more regularly, with greater attention and devotion ; for God regards not so much the quantity as the quality.

112.

THE HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS.

"*If thou didst know the gift of God.*" (John 4 : 10.)

It is true, that we are obliged, by the precept of the Church, to hear Mass only on Sundays and holy-days of obligation ; but what Christian is there, who does not perceive that, since there is now such a large number of churches and priests, he is not dispensed from the responsibility of hearing Mass on week-days, whenever it is possible for him to do so ?

The holy Mass, my dear young man, must not be wanting in your order of daily exercises, even when,—being master of yourself,—you are not admonished by any one to attend it.

Is not that august Sacrifice the most sublime of all mysteries?

Is it not the grandest act of our holy religion?

In what else is greater honor given to the heavenly Father? How can he be more worthily thanked? What is there in religion by which he can be more efficaciously propitiated? What can induce him more readily to pour down upon us his choicest blessings?

He who hears Mass devoutly, participates in the salutary effects of this most holy Sacrifice of Praise, Thanksgiving, Petition, and Propitiation.

Of course, the holy Sacrifice of the Mass is offered up for all absent Christians, and no member of the household of faith is excluded; but its special fruit is applied to those only who are really present, and who really unite themselves with the celebrant.

The holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the centre of our holy religion. Everything tends to it; everything radiates from it.

The holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the glowing focus in which all graces are collected. From our holy altars, the incense of sacrifice ascends to heaven,—the sweet odor of the most sacred Blood, which cries out louder and more efficaciously than the blood of Abel;—and from the throne of God, descend blessings upon this earth—blessings over all, but blessings, in particular, upon him that celebrates Mass, and upon those who hear it.

Who knows but that God's just wrath would long since have destroyed this wicked world, had not the divine Victim, continually offered on countless altars, been always crying to heaven for mercy and pardon?

Blind, foolish, wilful, selfish creatures that we are ! we do not stretch out our hands for that eucharistic treasure ! The least labor for its acquisition is reckoned too difficult.

O young man, how much you lose, when you so easily omit hearing Mass !

Behold, the holy Angels surround our altars with reverent awe, and longingly await the supreme moment when the Incarnation of Christ is renewed in a mystical manner ! And you, whom it also concerns, are absent from this Sacrifice ; you have something more important to do ; you are not willing to make a little sacrifice of your time, comfort, and repose !

O, what a scandal your sloth and effeminacy would have been to the early Christians, who were accustomed to hear Mass in hidden places, and amongst those dangerous surroundings, where divine worship was attended often at the risk of life itself !

How often are we put to the blush, by new converts in far-off lands, who frequently travel many miles, and allow neither work, fatigue, nor dangers, to hinder them from attendance at the holy Sacrifice !

Know, my young friend, that the Mass is a special fountain of strength to the Christian young man ; here, he finds rich graces for a manly combat against his impetuous passions. Our holy altar is a secure haven in the most violent storms of the soul ; it is a safe asylum for the sorely-tempted. On its consecrated steps, he may repose, when, in the hard struggle with the enemy, he finds his strength and courage beginning to desert him. O, if thou didst know the gift of God ! (John 4 : 10.)

The manner of hearing Mass most acceptable to God, and most profitable to ourselves, is, undoubtedly, that of meditation on the Passion of Christ.

Nothing, too, is easier than to occupy one's self during

Mass, with the contemplation of our suffering Saviour. All that we there see and hear, reminds us of his cords and bonds, of his seven painful journeys, of the tribunals of judgment, of Golgotha, the cross, his various torments, his shedding of blood, the separation of his blessed soul and body. The priest's vestments, the altar, the inclinations of the head, the genuflections, the sign of the cross, the stretching out of the hands, the significant words,—all point to the Man of sorrows. All you need, is to follow the priest with eye, ear, and heart, and you accompany Jesus from the Garden of Olives to Calvary, and from Calvary to the silent sepulchre.

Others prefer to accompany the priest, step by step, in the prayers he recites ; they listen to his words, and pray as he does. When he praises God, they do likewise ; when he supplicates, they unite in his supplications ; and when he implores mercy, they implore mercy with him.

Others find in the three principal parts of the Mass sufficient material wherewith to occupy themselves throughout it. The Offertory, the Consecration, and the Communion,—to these three principal parts of the Mass they chiefly devote their attention in their thoughts and prayers. It is the holy Communion, especially, for which they prepare themselves during Mass, and which they spiritually receive during the actual Communion of the priest.

Others, again, occupy themselves with certain forms of prayers, as they are found in prayer books. In their choice, however, simplicity, and solidity of contents should chiefly be looked to. Very useful, also, is the recitation of the sorrowful mysteries of the Rosary.

Each person may follow the bent of his own devotion. One loves to hear Mass in this way,—another, in another. The best way is that which follows most closely the sacrifice, and which most lovingly animates the soul with the spirit of sacrifice.

113.

BEHAVIOR IN CHURCH.

"*Holiness becometh thy house, O Lord.*" (Ps. 92 : 5.)

Who does not know that the house of God is a house of prayer? (Mark 11 : 17.) It is true, the glory of the Lord covereth the heavens, and the earth is full of praise, and there is no space of the infinite or the immense that is not his dwelling-place. (Hab. 3 : 3.) But who would consider it improper for God to select certain spots on earth, where his name shall be, where he may hearken to the prayers which his servants pray, that he may hearken to their supplications? (3. Kings 8 : 29.)

Wisdom and beneficence, sanctity and love, cause him to choose places which remind us more impressively of his presence and nearness—true houses of God, where his service is more zealously cultivated, and homage more fittingly paid to his greatness.

To such holy places, we must render due respect and reverence.

Yes, holiness becometh thy house, *O* Lord. (Ps. 92 : 5.) I must behave there in a manner such as the dignity of the place demands. Whilst there, I must remain conscious to myself, that it is thy house, the abode of the most exalted of sovereigns, the dwelling-place of almighty God.

Interior and exterior devotion are both indispensable,

If there are certain rules of propriety upon the observance of which depends our entrance into the houses of the great ones of this world, surely towards God such behavior is a bounden duty, bearing some relation to his grandeur and majesty.

I am in the presence of God,—I am speaking to him.

Who is God? Who am I?

The answer of these questions indicates the sentiment which I must bring with me into the sanctuary, and in which I must continue whilst in his holy temple.

To this sentiment, the outward carriage or bearing must correspond. It must show forth humility, modesty, calmness, and recollection.

And, indeed, this reverence and recollection are called forth by everything that is in the house of God; nothing is there that does not remind us of God, of eternity, of the soul, and its salvation.

The height and width of the church remind us of the courts of heaven, in which God gives himself to his elect as their eternal reward, and into which, it must be our indefatigable endeavor to enter.

The sacred ornaments and decorations typify the riches of God, his power which created the whole world out of nothing, and his supreme sovereignty over all; as well as the purity and adornment which should characterize the temples of our hearts, no less than the material temples of God.

The crosses, which beckon us from all sides, tell us of the Redemption, of Christ's death upon Calvary, of his sacrifice of love, of the holy obligation of loving him in return, and of giving ourselves entirely to him.

The pictures and statues which adorn the altars and walls, recall to memory God's benefits, the virtues of the Saints and other highly important and sublime truths.

The judgment-seats of penance, the confessionals, ad-

monish us of our sins, past and present—of the great mercy of God, of that so necessary penance, from which, however, we so easily dispense ourselves.

The pulpit recalls to us the priceless treasure we possess in the true faith, the unspeakable blessings of revealed religion, of the word of God, and the message of the Gospel.

The altars, which, as it were, are dripping with the blood of the Lamb, loudly proclaim the goodness of God who so loved the world, as to give it his only-begotten Son. (John 3 : 16.)

The tabernacle, the Holy of Holies, the abode of our Best-beloved, the perpetual dwelling-place of the compassionate God-Man,—around which (though invisibly), innumerable heavenly spirits hover,—this, too, reminds us of an incomprehensible and truly divine love.

The Communion rail, the table of the Lord, does it not bring back to your memory your first Holy Communion, when you were, perhaps, far different from what you are now? It tells you of that heavenly Bread, the eating of which, you leave to others, and for which you have so little desire!

The ever-burning lamp, with its mysterious light, points out to you the Light of the world (John 8 : 12), that has appeared to us favored ones in this earthly night; it reminds us of the fire of devotion which should burn in our hearts.

In the face of all these significant objects, surrounded, perhaps, by the faithful, who, penetrated with the sublimity of the place, and conscious of the presence of God, cast their eyes upon the earth, and in the most modest posture assist at the divine service,—can you become a scandal to heaven and earth, and, through levity, coldness, or pride, dishonor the house of God? O stones of the sanctuary, ye pillars and arches, ye altars and

statues, adore ye the true God, since heartless men remain silent in his holy presence !

Yes, many young men bring their levity and indifference to church with them. Their thoughtless manner of entering the sacred precincts, their undue haste in making the sign of the cross, their irreverent way of kneeling and making genuflections, their gazing about, their restlessness, and unseemly haste in going out,—O, it is easily to be seen from all these, that they do not know what a church is ! Is it, perhaps, a gloomy dungeon to their giddy minds ? or is God's presence actually disagreeable to them ?

Alas ! many young men bring cold and icy hearts ! Of all the wonders of love which the Heart of God works, and is ever ready to work in their behalf, they seem to know nothing. What distraction, what tepidity, and sloth ! A short prayer of the lips, and then,—tediousness, weariness. Do they converse with God ? do they ask any favors of him ?

How many young men do not lay aside their arrogance and pride, even when they betake themselves to church. It is as if they were addressing an equal, or, as if they were doing a favor to God. No reverence, no modesty, no recollection. They dress vainly, are ashamed to bend their knees, to take holy water, to bless themselves, to remain in a modest, respectful posture, to use a prayer-book or beads, or otherwise to betray any sign of devotion.

Young man, who are you, when in church ? A beggar. Do you come to enrich God ? No. You come in order to receive Hence, before the holy altar, pride and arrogance are out of place ; they are a sacrilege.

Who are you, and what should you be in church ? One that prays,—a suppliant. Reflect a little ; remember your character ; humility, alone, becomes the beggar.

O, then, bow head and heart, and bend your knees be-

fore that thrice-holy God, whom the Angels adore, covering their faces with their wings (Is. 6 : 2) ; before him whom the ancients adore, falling down before him, casting their crowns before his throne. (Apoc. 4 : 10.)

You come to the house of God to receive blessings. O, do not draw down curses upon your own head! Do not make the holy place a den of thieves (Luke 19 : 46), by unnecessary talk, unbecoming curiosity, dissipation, and waywardness. Do not compel Jesus, by your bad behavior, to show his indignation as he once did to the buyers and sellers in the temple. (Matt. 21 : 12.)

Recollect yourself whilst on the way to church, and think of him before whom you are about to appear.

Walk reverently into the house of God ; take holy water, bless yourself, bend your knee before the Most High, and betake yourself to your seat. When there, make an act of faith in the Real Presence of Jesus in the holy Sacrament of the Altar, and adore him.

Then, pray, either vocally or mentally, and assist devoutly at the divine service.

Let your conduct be unassuming. Shun singularity, which might disturb others, or bring devotion into disrepute. Remarkable demonstrations of piety are offensive, and cause distractions in others. Let your devotion be well-ordered. Assume an humble posture ; and by your modest deportment, show that the heart is full of the action which the whole man performs.

Whilst in church, occupy yourself only with God ; it is for his sake, alone, that you come thither.

Wait calmly till the end of the service, and leave the holy place reluctantly, like one who is pained to leave a beloved Friend, not like one who seems to regret having given even those few moments to God.

O my son, fear the Lord, and the King (Prov. 24 : 21),

and reverence him. Behold, how terrible is this place! it is no other but the house of God, and the gate of heaven (Gen. 28 . 17); and the place, whereon thou standest, is holy ground. (Exod. 3 : 5.)

114.

A LIFE OF DISCIPLINE.

"*Let all things be done decently, and according to order.*" (1. Cor. 14 : 40.)

Do you know the picture which the holy Scriptures draw of the horrible abode of the damned? A land of misery and darkness, where the shadow of death, and no order, but everlasting horror dwelleth. (Job 10 : 22.)

A gloomy picture, yet a sad truth;—a life without system and order—a life of absolute freedom, and of mere caprice, is very often an idle, and consequently, a useless, bad life, deserving only of hell. It is, in many respects, a sinful life, because it is a life that is accessible to the passions, and therefore, leading to damnation; at all events, it is an un-Christian life, totally unlike the holy, well-ordered life of the elect in heaven, and which we should strive to imitate upon earth.

God is supreme order, perfect harmony. In everything that he does, order and discipline reign; all proceeds systematically, and in regular gradation. Reaching from end

to end mightily, and ordering all things sweetly. (Wisd. 8 : 1.)

Young man, endeavor to be an image of the Most High ; live with order, and in order ; do all things decently, and according to order. (1. Cor. 14 . 40.)

He who lives with order, lives for God.

Yes, he lives for God ; and living thus, he sins less, because he discharges more faithfully the duties of his calling —because he saves more time to attend to the affair of his salvation.

He lives for God, because he imitates him, the God of order, more closely.

He lives for God, because he lives in a manner more pleasing to God.

He lives for God, because he acquires greater merits for himself. A life of order demands many sacrifices,—is marked by much mortification and self-denial.

Order, however, ought never degenerate into inflexibility ; for if it should, it loses its peculiar charm—that unrestrained freedom of action. which leaves to life its fulness and freshness.

He who, in early life, does not accustom himself to order, cannot do so later, without great labor. The man of order is usually the man of deeds. He does much, because he works wisely ; he accomplishes good results, because he works with conscientiousness, and under sacrifices.

While a young man is at school or college, he is much helped in many ways, by the regulations and general order which prevail therein. He has but to remain faithful to the rules, and, apart from the free time which falls to all students, the greater part of the day is arranged for him.

When he becomes his own master, and can dispose of his entire day, he should arrange and settle the duties of

its consecutive hours ; and the plan being once made, he should adhere to it, and strictly observe it, under penalty of self-inflicted punishment.

As to the occupations themselves, they must be carefully regulated. First, the necessary ; then, the useful ; and lastly, the agreeable. Duty before pleasure.

Your daily life is like a picture. Not only must its subjects be properly arranged, a frame must also be provided, which shall unite all, yet give them a suitable relief. This frame is the order of the day. It imparts unity and symmetry to the whole day's work.

You find it irksome to move always within a certain self-appointed groove. You think so, because you have never yet made an earnest effort to live a life of order.

If you had once accustomed yourself to such a life, it would become sweet to you, it would become a necessity to you.

A life of discipline is sweet, because time passes more rapidly to those who live it, and there is no room for ennui.

It is sweet, because it bears in itself the consciousness of sacrifice and self-control.

It is sweet, because in it, and through it, fruits ripen which are worthy of heaven.

It is necessary, because one is only happy, when, and in so far, as one can lead a life of order ; and in the various new relations into which one enters, order is the first thing that must be observed.

O, that order may become a necessity to you !

115.

GOOD THOUGHTS.

"*Let the thought of God be in thy mind, and all thy discourse on the commandments of the Highest.*"
(Ecclus. 9 : 23.)

It is the privilege of very young children and fools to be thoughtless.

There are certain labors which claim the service of the mind as well as of the body. There are others which are simply manual, physical, and which do not call for any close attention on the part of the intellect.

Is it proper for me in occupation of the latter sort to exercise no control over my thoughts ?

No, indeed, that would be loss of time, that would be an injury to the soul.

Thought is too precious a gift of God, for me not to make the best possible use of it.

Thought is a too prolific source of true wisdom and heavenly merit, for me to allow a large portion of my time to pass without it.

Of what does the sinner think ? His thoughts are bent upon impiety, upon injuring his neighbor ; he broods on revenge, dissimulation, deeds of violence, arrogance, and rebellion ; he allows his thoughts to dwell upon abominable things, on sensual enjoyments, and the trangression of God's wise and holy laws.

Of what does the worldling think? Of vanity, human praise; of trifles and pastimes, of hollow and absurd things, of profit and honor, of pleasure and amusement without end, of things which do not concern him, of matters which by no means promote his true welfare.

Of what does the good man think? Of God and divine things, of the duties of his calling, of how he can discharge them more and more faithfully, and unite his soul more and more intimately with God. He thinks of ways and means of avoiding sin; of good works, and good examples of virtues, in the practice of which he desires to become perfect; of the frailty and short duration of all temporal things; of the future life, towards which he is journeying with rapid strides; of his heavenly home; of his dear Saviour, to whom he owes so much, and with whom he hopes, one day, to dwell for ever.

It is true that the imagination and memory exercise a powerful influence over our thoughts, and oftentimes carry them off against our very will; but, after all, thinking is our own affair; and if we be really masters in our own house, we will so manage that our thoughts shall not, knowingly, extend to subjects other than those with which we wish them to be occupied.

If this were not the case—if thoughts were not voluntary things, no account of them could be demanded of us. And yet: I will visit your ways upon you, and I will repay you your desires, says the Lord. (Osee 4 : 9.)

It depends, therefore, entirely upon yourself to give your thoughts a bad, a worldly, or a good, yea, a heavenly direction.

To consent to evil thoughts is to think for hell. Perverse thoughts separate from God. (Wisd. 1 : 3.) Evil thoughts are an abomination to the Lord. (Prov. 15 : 26.) The Lord hateth a heart that deviseth wicked plots. (Prov. 6 :

18.) **Behold, I** will bring evil upon this people, the fruits of their own thoughts. (Jer. 6 : 19.)

Vain thoughts are lost thoughts. They are unprofitable thoughts : wasting and destruction are in their ways. (Is. 59 : 7.) He that wanteth understanding, thinketh vain things, and the foolish and erring man thinketh foolish things. (Ecclus. 16 : 23.)

Good thoughts nourish the mind, give it salutary exercise, make it resemble God, whose thoughts are all-holy, replenish it with good desires, powerfully stimulate the will, and produce blessed enterprises, and meritorious deeds. The care of the good is with the Most High. (Wisd. 5 : 16.)

Occupy your mind, therefore, at those times in which no special work is required of it, with good, or, at least, harmless thoughts.

Consider how you can arrange, or carry on, this or that affair so as to please God ; reflect how Jesus would have acted under similar circumstances.

Look back upon what you have already done ; test it, and ascertain what should be amended, if the case should ever again recur.

By the good use of creatures, even of inanimate things, often remind yourself of God's infinite perfections ; thank him, praise him, supplicate, and pray to him. You that are mindful of the Lord, hold not your peace. (Is. 62 : 6.)

Open your heart to salutary truths—truths, which will ground you in the fear of God—truths, which will inspire you with holy love, and strengthen you in God's service.

Offer to certain events connecting points in your heart. View everything in the light of faith. Draw spiritual advantage from everything. Attach to everything consequences unto salvation.

Make some great thought your own, some profound maxim to which you may often revert, upon which you may

ground your actions, and by which you may be strongly and continually influenced ; for instance : What will this profit me for eternity ? or : I am born for greater things.

If a good thought arise spontaneously within you, drive it not away. It is a good gift, from above, coming down from the Father of lights. (James 1 : 17.) Let not the part of a good gift overpass thee. (Ecclus. 14 : 14.) It is a blessed germ, which, nurtured by you, may grow up into a stately plant, a fruitful tree. Hold fast to this good thought ; let it penetrate your mind ; employ it ; make good use of it. It might easily be, that your eternal salvation depends upon one good thought. Was it not so with many of the Saints ?

Let your reading of good books, and your intercourse with good people, be the occasion of good thoughts to you.

Put a bridle on your inconstancy ; it not only blights the blossom of many a good thought, but will not suffer those that remain to come to perfection. Keep away from you foolish, giddy, people—small-minded, frivolous people, who will infallibly draw you into the vortex of their own meaningless existence. Avoid those men whose miserable shallowness only too often is a glaring contradiction to the rôle they assume, and to that grandiloquence with which they talk and boast of rank, wealth, and culture, as if everything lay in these.

Do not excuse yourself on the ground of youth. It may be difficult to awaken good thoughts, to fill your mind with them, to hold fast to them—but it is by no means impossible.

At all events, it is as important for you, as it is for older persons, to think of good things. Thereby, you prevent fierce interior struggles ; for if your mind is usefully employed, it is preserved from youthful excesses. You accustom yourself to prudence. And since business, as yet, does

not claim your attention overmuch, do not wait to form the habit of good thoughts until later years, when grave responsibilities, and cares of every description, may press very heavily upon you. Now, you have the merit of free-will, by drawing within the circle of your actions that which lies far from your youth.

Begin, then, to pay attention to your thoughts. Fill up the spiritual void ; accustom yourself to recollection, reflection, calmness, and steadiness. How happy you will be when arrived at maturer years, if good and pious thoughts have become natural and familiar to you !

Yes, let the thought of God be in thy mind, and all thy intercourse on the commandments of the Most High. (Ecclus. 9 : 23.)

Just as, from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness (Mark 7 : 21, 22),—so are good thoughts the source of glorious virtues, good works, and praiseworthy deeds.

In all thy ways, think on the Lord, and he will direct thy youthful steps. (Prov. 3 : 6.)

116.

SPIRITUAL READING.

"*The ear that heareth the reproofs of life, shall abide in the midst of the wise.*" (Prov. 15 : 31.)

You read, and love to read, young man. Your desire for knowledge is praiseworthy.

Your reading, however, should not be for mere amusement, nor for the cultivation of the understanding alone. Read, also, books by which the heart and the soul may be benefited, and piety increased ; by which you may be spurred on in the practice of virtue, and strengthened in your faith ; in a word, books that contain lessons and admonitions for eternal life.

Does it tire you to read a pious book ?

But you are not to read it the whole day, nor even for an hour, continuously. Set apart a short time only to be daily devoted to this blessed occupation, and keep it faithfully. Read as you ought to read—and you shall infallibly derive a benefit from this exercise, such as you have never anticipated.

Spiritual books are those that have exclusively, or, at least, in a great measure, the salvation of the soul for their object.

They teach us our relation to God and our neighbor ; they treat of the malice of sin, of the beauty of virtue in general, and of certain particular virtues.

They aid the purification of the soul, by pointing out to us our ordinary failings and faults ; they call our attention to the duties of our state of life, and thoroughly explain them

They lay open to us the snares of Satan ; they show us how we can escape them ; they are holy armories, in which are stored many spiritual weapons to be used against the enemies of our souls.

They serve us as guiding stars upon the way of salvation, warning us against abysses, protecting us from devious ways.

They hold up before us glorious examples and saintly models.

They arouse the slumbering conscience with the trumpet-sound of divine threats ; they soften the obdurate, encourage the timid, instruct the erring, stimulate the slothful, and guard the zealous heart.

They turn us away from earthly affairs, by disgusting us with them, awakening a desire for something better, a hunger and thirst after justice, a longing for heaven and heavenly things.

They fill the heart with a holy love of God, by making known to us his glorious attributes, his sublime perfection ; or by bringing before us, in a more lively manner, the ineffable benefits with which his liberality continually overwhelms us.

Good books make us better acquainted with the life and doctrines of our Redeemer ; they disclose to us his Sacred Heart, and open to us the immense treasures of his wisdom and knowledge which are hidden therein. (Col. 2 : 3.)

Behold the sweet and good effects of spiritual books .— books, which, resting on the fundamental principles of the Gospel, explain them more clearly, develop them more fully, and adapt them more practically, to individual states of

life. Is it not natural that they should make the way of salvation safer and shorter ?

But that you may derive fruit from your spiritual reading, accustom yourself to order therein, and proceed judiciously.

Choose books which are more calculated to move the heart to piety, than to satisfy the understanding.

Read not from mere curiosity, and only for the purpose of adding to your stock of knowledge. Say : My soul above all shall be benefited by this reading. Hence, I will enter upon it for and with God.

Recollect yourself a moment before you begin : Thou from whom every dew-drop receives its fructifying blessing, help and bless me, earth without water. (Ps. 142 : 6.) Enlighten me, move my will, make me understand what I read, and practise what I have read !

Read with reverence : think it is God that speaks to you. Yes, speak, Lord, thy servant heareth. (1. Kings 3 : 10.)

Read with attention, without haste, and not superficially ; otherwise, nothing will remain, and the stream will lose itself with the same impetuosity with which it began to flow. Try to enter into the meaning of what you read. Apply it to yourself. Reflect for a while on some important truth that strikes you. Draw some salutary resolutions for your daily life from what you have read. Read little at a time, but read that little thoroughly.

Read with order—from beginning to end. Let your favorite book be one ; take it up again and again, even if you have read it time and again.

Read with perseverance ; at the stated time ; daily, or several times a week, or, at least on Sundays and holy-days, on confession and Communion days.

He that is of God, heareth the words of God (John 8 : 47) : and the reason why a spiritual book disgusts and fa-

tigues many, is because they are not of God they loathe the things of God.

Though the reading of solid or sacred subjects may not be very easy or agreeable to a light turn of mind, yet spiritual reading, regularly, and properly made, and with an earnest solicitude for one's salvation, is of decided benefit to a young man.

Through the perusal of such books, assisted by serious reflection, he acquires a maturity of spirit, a ripeness of thought and manner, such as worldly knowledge alone can never give ; for the ear that heareth the reproofs of life, shall abide in the midst of wise men. (Prov. 15 : 31.) Through thy commandments, thou hast made me wiser than my enemies. I have understood more than all my teachers, because thy testimonies are my meditation. I have had understanding above ancients, because I have sought thy commandments. (Ps. 118 : 98-100.)

And what a powerful wall will not these lessons from above, this intercourse with a higher and better world, oppose to the false maxims of a wicked world, and to the almost resistless flood of bad example !

Yes, take and read ; take and read again and again. May God bless your taking and reading as he once blessed that of St. Augustine. Now, as then, the word of God is as a two-edged sword (Hebr. 4 : 12), effectual, piercing, penetrating. May it sweetly wound you unto salvation !

117.

MEDITATION.

"*Blessed is the man that shall continue in wisdom and that shall meditate in his justice, and in his mind shall think of the all-seeing eye of God.*" (Ecclus. 14 : 22.)

There is a form of prayer which, although understood and practised only by a few, surpasses all others in value and utility, and hence, has been diligently made use of by the Saints, and pious spiritual persons.

To meditate, means to fix the eye of the mind upon a certain object, to examine it closely in all its lights, and to apply the conclusions we draw therefrom to our own special needs.

Vocal prayer makes use of certain words and forms corresponding to individual devotion ; but meditation is the prayer of the mind, which sometimes breaks forth into words, like a flame from a smothered fire, and betrays the interior glow.

We have will, memory, and understanding ; to set these faculties of our soul into activity, and to employ them upon some divine truth, or mystery of our holy religion, in order, thereby, to promote one's own amendment, is to meditate, to pray interiorly.

We are bound to regulate our lives according to the truths of our faith ; but how can we do so, if we be not penetrated with these truths ? if we be lacking in that lively conviction

which proceeds to action ? if the will be not joined with the understanding ?

A truth which does not touch us intimately, and with which we are not thoroughly penetrated, is a dead truth as far as we are concerned. The most beautiful landscape will afford no pleasure to the eye, if it be obscured by twilight, or brooded over by a heavy fog or mist.

When there is question of a spiritual life, of a higher perfection, we may assert with absolute certainty, that without reflection, without meditation, a solid, interior life is not possible.

How can the heart separate itself from earthly dross, unless, by means of meditation, it becomes more and more conscious of the vanity of worldly things, of the value of heavonly treasures ?

How can man grow in the love of God, unless this Supreme Being be presented to him through meditation upon his perfections, upon the multitude and loveliness of his attributes ?

In what other way, except by meditation, are the life of Christ and his exalted virtues brought to, and impressed upon, our understanding ?

True, sermons and spiritual reading are very well calculated to penetrate us with salutary truths ; but is not that upon which we ourselves have reflected, which we have graphically represented to our own minds, much more lasting, much more easily reduced to practice ? Moreover, sermons and reading must be aided and supported by reflection ; without it, they will be entirely deficient of permanent benefit to our souls.

Why, then, is it that so few Christians meditate ? They will tell you they have no time for it. Possibly, with some, this reason may be true. But, look at the countless multitude who find time for every other occupation, for all im-

aginable amusements ! Why is there no time to be found for this holy exercise ?

They do not understand how to meditate. Can not the method of meditating be learned like everything else ? Does not the worldling daily meditate after his own fashion ? See, how he reflects upon worldly concerns, how to successfully begin this or that affair, how to avoid this or that danger. He reflects on some money-question, some work of art, some scientific point. The sinner even deliberates on a crime which he is about to commit, weighing the undertaking from every point of view.—Really, meditation is not such a stranger to us as you would have us believe ! What is it but reflecting, deliberating, pondering, considering, arranging, matters in advance ?—all, however, for the soul.

Why are there so few young men who meditate ?

It is too hard for them sufficiently to recollect themselves. Yes, meditation should put a stop to fickleness, to volatility. Meditation, as already remarked, is reflection on divine things ; and such a reflection chains down the unsteady mind, inclines it to seriousness, fills it with important, heavenly, and eternal subjects.

Meditation is arduous ; the faculties of the soul are thereby to be exercised—some exertion is necessary. But why not be willing to do something for one's poor soul ?

Meditation is tedious. O sad word ! They have said to God : Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. (Job 21 : 14.) Is it, then, tedious to search for truth, to converse and commune with God, to feast on beauty, to penetrate into divine perfections !

I do not like to be alone with God and myself ! This, undoubtedly, is the truest reason. Why do you not love to be alone with yourself ? Because I would then see what I am. Why do you not love to be alone with God ? I would

then see what I ought to be. Hear, O foolish people, and without understanding: who have eyes, and see not, and ears, and hear not. (Jer. 5 : 21.) Wherefore, hast thou eyes? They love darkness, rather than the light. (John 3 : 19.)

Granted, O young man, that you would attempt to exercise yourself in this useful kind of prayer,—how are you to go about it?

First, appoint for yourself a certain time of the day (the morning is the best time for it), and give to God a half, or, at least, a quarter, of an hour, even if you have to steal it from your sleep.

Prepare the points of your meditation the evening before, or immediately before you begin to meditate,—that is, determine the matter of the meditation, making use of some authorized book, divide it into points, and fix upon the fruit which you desire to draw from it.

When the appointed time has come, laying aside every other occupation, go into your room, or some quiet church, recollect yourself, placing yourself, by an act of faith, in the presence of God; then, adore him, entreat him to enlighten your understanding, and to move your will.

Pursue your reflections upon your chosen subject, whether it be a truth of faith, a mystery, or a doctrine.

First, exercise your memory. Follow the subject through all its bearings and directions; bring forth whatever is calculated to throw more light upon it, or that may, in any way, refer to it.

Next comes the work of the understanding, which is to penetrate deeper into the subject. Motives are weighed, applications made, conclusions drawn, the past, present, and future, considered.

To all these the will associates itself, ever and anon praising, thanking, loving, respecting, detesting, making resolu-

tions, and humbly asking for assistance, as it lays them all before the Lord. These resolutions must proceed from the subject of the meditation, and must correspond to one's particular necessities ; they must be practical, and, above all, not too general. All depends upon this. Though the meditation aims in general at the reform of our whole future life, yet it chiefly tends to the regulating of our daily life, and rendering it pleasing to God—to the extirpation from our hearts of one vice after another and of planting therein the virtues in beautiful succession. Yes, it is especially the will that must be moved by meditation.

When the appointed time is up, give your heart free scope, that it may entertain itself with God. Then, your resolutions will receive fresh impetus and consecration ; then, you will be inspired anew for the service of the Lord.

Do you not think, young man, that such an exercise would benefit you ?

Even if you can not meditate according to the rule and method, could you not take to hand some pious book full of good, practical thoughts, and read it slowly, a certain portion each day, passing and reflecting on what you have read, —giving vent, from time to time, to pious aspirations and ejaculations, and finally, from what you have read, draw a good resolution for the day ?

O Lord, how true thy words are !—With desolation is the land made desolate, because there is none that considereth in the heart. (Jer. 12 : 11.)

Alas, this is the reason why my heart is so desolate ! I pass my time so frivolously, because I do not enter into myself, because I do not reflect.

As yet, the fear of God has not taken root within me, because I am almost a stranger to eternal truths.

I am not, as yet, enamored with virtue, because I have not yet become conscious of its sublimity, its worth, its reward !

My longing after heaven is yet so weak, because I do not know God ; because I have never rightly reflected on the glory of heaven ; because the future is a riddle to me —eternity, a mere presentiment.

Young man, make the attempt. A quarter of an hour daily. Believe me, that if you give a quarter of an hour each day to meditating properly, you will not be lost, you will surely escape eternal damnation. O, make the trial, take the trouble ! Your soul, heaven, and eternity are at stake !

Blessed is the man that shall continue in wisdom, and that shall meditate in his justice, and in his mind shall think of the all-seeing eye of God. He that considereth her ways in his heart, and hath understanding in her secrets, who goeth after her as one that traceth, and stayeth in her ways. (Ecclus. 14 : 22, 23.)

118.

DIFFERENT METHODS OF PRAYER.

"*Be filled with the Holy Spirit, singing, and making melody in your hearts to the Lord.*" (Ephes. 5 : 18, 19.)

Besides purely mental, or purely vocal prayer, there are other sorts of prayer which may do good service to those who have, as yet, no facility in meditating. Yea, they may be of benefit even to more advanced souls, when bodily or spiritual fatigue render meditation difficult, or when it seems judicious to make a change.

For instance, there is the Lord's Prayer. Have you never tried to say it slowly, pausing for a while at every word that conveys a complete sense?

Does not the bee tarry upon every blossom and flower as long as it finds any honey therein?

So should you gather spiritual honey from the efficacious words of this or that prayer, dwelling, from day to day, upon the several petitions.

In like manner, one may make aspirations; or, he may recite slowly and understandingly an act of faith, a penitential psalm, or the like.

At other times, it may be beneficial to go over, prayerfully, the ten commandments of God, and the six precepts of the Church. First, examine the sense of each commandment, what it forbids, what it commands; then, ask yourself: What was God's purpose in commanding or prohibiting this or that? What fruits shall I derive from the observance of this commandment? What earthly gain is attached to it? What heavenly reward? How have I hitherto acquitted myself of this duty? What is to be amended? Wherein must I make an immediate change of action?

At another time, you may meditate on the different sins in their regular order,—the seven deadly sins, the four sins against the Holy Ghost, the nine ways of being accessory to another's sins. Wherein does the disorder of each of them consist? What motives should induce me to avoid them? What has been done hitherto? How shall I act for the future?

It will be useful, sometimes, to make the five senses of your body and the faculties of your soul the subject of your reflection. Why has God given me this sense? O, what a great gift is this! Yet, how easily is it abused! How have I hitherto used it? What use shall I make of it for the fu-

ture ? How did our Lord, whilst upon earth, employ this or that faculty ? How well regulated was not its use with the Blessed Virgin, and the Saints ? O Lord, I will henceforth be more careful ! Grant me thy grace, O God. . . I earnestly resolve.

In like manner, we may go over the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, or meditate upon various virtues,—the three theological virtues : faith, hope, charity,—the four cardinal virtues : prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance, —various other moral virtues, especially those which are opposed to the seven capital sins.

The so-called eight beatitudes afford a rich field for meditation. What does each one of them signify ? What virtue does it recommend ? What reward does it promise ? Have I hitherto practised it ? Why not ? What is to be done in future ? May I be indifferent to these great promises of my Saviour ?

You perceive now, how ingenious the Saints were to procure for their souls plenty of spiritual nourishment ; what devices they resorted to ; how they studied their interior needs, and seized upon the proper means to satisfy them.

O heavenly wisdom ! that teachest us how to gain the holy usury of prayer—that directest us how to make our intercourse with God a sort of school for life, a treasury for eternity

For the young man it will be of special benefit frequently to reflect upon the destiny of youth, and again and again to recur to the axiom : What things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap. (Gal. 6 : 8.)

Yes, youth is the seed-time of manhood, of old age, yea, and of the endless eternity

He who soweth sparingly, shall also reap sparingly. (2. Cor. 9 : 6.)

He that soweth in his flesh, of the flesh also shall reap

corruption : but he that soweth in the spirit, of the spirit shall reap life everlasting. (Gal. 6 : 8.)

My son, sow not evils in the furrows of injustice: and thou shalt not reap them sevenfold. (Eccles. 7 : 3)

One thing is certain, at all events : he who exercises himself in the above, and similar, modes of prayer, will, at least, succeed in performing his usual vocal prayer (which must not degenerate into a mere lip-service), with more recollection, greater relish, and more abundant spiritual fruit.

O Lord, teach us to pray. (Luke 11 : 1.) Thou wilt that we should pray always, and not faint. (Luke 18 : 1.) Monotony tires us poor, weak, miserable mortals ; come thou to our help, and teach us variety in one, and one in variety.

May the Holy Ghost replenish us, so that we speak to ourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual canticles, singing, and making melody in our hearts to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to God and the Father. (Ephes. 5 : 18-20.)

119.

THE EVENING.

"*If thou sleep, thou shalt not fear ; thou shall rest, and thy sleep shall be sweet.*" (Prov. 3 : 24.)

Stay with us, because it is towards evening, and the day is now far spent. (Luke 24 : 29.)

In prospective helplessness, man naturally looks around for protectors. And what condition could be more helpless than that of a sleeper ?

It is, therefore, only right for us to pray before we retire to rest—to recommend ourselves to the Lord, upon whose loving Heart we rest as securely, as under his protection we perform our daily work.

Foolish young man, how dare you go to sleep without prayer? How dare you conclude your day with an omission, worthy of a stolid brute? What, if you should die this night, and awaken in eternity?

Has your day been spent so profitably and sinlessly that you have no reason to ask God's pardon, to appease that mighty Judge, into whose hands you may possibly fall before morning?

Ah! I implore of you, say your night-prayers conscientiously.

When the appointed hour for rest has come—for it behooves you to be systematic in this as well as in other things—withdraw, recollect yourself, and kneel down. It is proper not to refuse to God this tribute of outward homage. He who waits to pray until he is stretched upon his bed, will too often, and too easily, fall asleep before he has finished his prayer.

Thank God for the benefits of your whole life, and especially for those of the past day.

Then, examine yourself upon the faults which you have committed during that time; repent of them and of all the sins of your past life, in the presence of God, and promise amendment.

Finally, recommend yourself and all that are near and dear to you, to the protection of the Most High, asking the loving protection of the Blessed Virgin, of St. Joseph, of the holy Angels, and of all the Saints of God. Remember the poor souls in Purgatory, and pray for all who may die during the coming night. Then, prepare to go to bed

Whilst undressing with all possible modesty, do not suf-

fer your mind to stray to worldly or sinful thoughts. Rather dwell upon good and holy subjects, reciting vocal prayers, until you dispose yourself in bed,—which it would be well to do as if it were your coffin.

With your hands folded upon your breast, the sign of the cross upon your forehead, the sweet and holy names of Jesus, Mary and Joseph upon your lips, make ready for repose.

If you fall asleep in this way, you have no cause for fear. Thou shalt rest, and thy sleep shall be sweet. (Prov. 3: 24.) Divine Providence will watch over your bed, as the mother over the cradle of her infant. Since its inventive love bestowed sleep on man, it will see to it, that all its holy purposes are fulfilled in your regard.

A carefully-made examination of conscience every evening for, at least, five or ten minutes, is of the utmost importance. It not only reconciles us to God, in case we have, in any manner, offended him during the day, but it supplies, so to say, for sacramental confession, and is a powerful means of promoting our spiritual progress. Hence, the Saints and spiritual writers have laid such great stress upon it.

Without a true knowledge of ourselves, there is no amendment, no progress : and without examination, there is no self-knowledge.

This useful self-knowledge does not consist in a certain general and very indefinite consciousness of our grosser faults and more perverse inclinations (which none, save one totally blind, could fail to notice). It consists in a more thorough knowledge which shows us the hidden workings of the passions ; their uprising on this or that occasion ; their causes, motives, gradations, and ramifications.

Such a knowledge can evidently be acquired only by repeated and exhaustive search into one's conscience—by a close and persistent scrutiny of one's heart.

Proceed, then, in this manner: After a short invocation of the Holy Ghost, go back in spirit to the time of your last examination of conscience. Review the hours of the day; call to mind all your thoughts, words, actions, omissions, and commissions.—Here, alas! I have failed grievously; there, I have hardly escaped venial sin; here, again, I was not prompt enough in rejecting the temptation; there, I could, and should, have done better; in that case, my intention was not pure; that good work could have been done in a better manner; that other one remains undone through my own fault; excellent opportunities have been neglected, good inspirations, unheeded; here, my predominant passion prevailed and gained the upper hand; there, again, I broke my good resolutions.

O God, my Lord, how weak, frail, sinful, and miserable I am! Not a single day without faults! Pity my wretchedness! I beg pardon. I resolve no more to do thus and so, especially on this or that occasion. God of goodness! help me with thy grace!

There is, also, a particular examination of conscience, whose object is to amend one special fault. Thus, one by one, the various faults which disfigure the soul, may be blotted out,—such as impatience, uncharitableness, want of delicacy, indiscretion, too great freedom of the senses, garrulity, curiosity, ambition, vanity, sloth.

Go, make the attempt, young man You desire to become good, to become better and better. Examine your youthful conscience diligently every evening, at least; and root out of it the ever-germinating roots of evil which you there discover.

May this self-examination, in union with the above prayers of thanksgiving and supplication, form for you a kind of regular evening service, whose acceptability to God, and profit to yourself, will be comprehended by you only in eter-

nity, where you will learn how many sins you have thereby prevented, and what merits you have thereby acquired.

120.

LIFE WITH THE CHURCH.

"*Let thy mother be joyful ; and let her rejoice that bore thee.*"
(Prov. 23 : 25.)

The position of a child of this world towards holy Mother-Church, is very different from that of a true and fervent Christian.

The former has no interest whatever in the Church ; her sufferings do not affect him, her joys are a matter of indifference to him ; of her means of grace he either makes no use at all, or, at best, only sparingly, tepidly, or merely from human motives. He smiles at her holy ceremonies, leaving them to others for their edification ; he does not observe her precepts and regulations, disregards her threats ; he sets no store by her blessings ; and her holy times and seasons are to him as if they were not.

The good Christian loves his Church ; her benefits are ever vividly before his eyes. He is attached to her with fervor and fidelity ; he considers it an honor to belong to her ; he defends her against calumnies ; he heeds her commands, anticipates her wishes ; he rejoices in her joy, and shares in her sorrows. He lives in, and with, her ; he is penetrated with, and governed by, her spirit in all his actions.

Young man, what is your position in regard to the Church ?

Is she a stranger to you ? Far from it ! she is your mother.

Is she indifferent to you ? Rather, she is your benefactress.

Will you not love and sympathize with her ? It is written : Let thy mother be joyful, and let her rejoice that bore thee.

O, always remain a faithful, loving son of holy Church—not only by believing all that she teaches, by observing what she prescribes, but, also, by making her spirit yours, by living in her life, by keeping, both inwardly and outwardly, those memorial times and seasons in which she celebrates the love and power of our God.

Each of the principal festivals of the ecclesiastical year is preceded by a corresponding time of preparation. The season of Advent introduces the most holy feast of Christmas, the forty day's fast, the glorious and joyful Easter ; and the ten days following the Ascension, the feast of Pentecost.

Then, the Church keeps also so-called Vigils, or eves of certain festivals, on which, (without mentioning the spirit of penance, which she then endeavors to enkindle for the special purification of our hearts,) she seeks to awaken a holy disposition corresponding to the succeeding feast. If we fall, as it were, unprepared upon these festivals,—if we take no thought of them, till they have come upon us,—there is reason to fear that they will neither find us in the proper disposition of mind, nor be able, in the short space of their duration, to impress upon us the great mysteries of Redemption, which they have for their object.

The good child of the Church rejoices over all these blessed regulations ; he understands the purposes of his wise mother. Religion must be practical · for it consists

in something more than a scanty participation in individual, quickly-passing festivals.

We must represent to ourselves the Church as a heaven-ordained institution, which delivers to us not only the sacred deposit of faith, but also the true method of divine worship, as it is most pleasing to God, and most profitable to man.

How beautiful, and above all, how useful, it would be, if, annually, the greatest work of divine love, the Redemption, would pass before our eyes in a series of powerful and richly-colored pictures; or, rather, if all its divine acts would be presented to us as so many living dramas.

The time of Advent, the time of longing and expectation for the world's Redeemer, would move us to prepare his coming,—to level the hills of pride in our hearts, and to fill up the spiritual valleys. (Luke 3 : 5.)

The longing grows more ardent, the expectation increases: Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the just. (Is. 45 : 8.) This sentiment becomes more intense, and, so to say, impetuous, uncontrolable.

At last, he is here, the long and ardently Desired! Emmanuel has come; the lovely Child is born, upon whose shoulders the government rests. (Is. 9 : 6.) Peace has descended upon earth to men of good-will. (Luke 2 : 14.) Every where, resound the words: Glory to God in the highest! All hearts beat joyfully, and all hasten to the crib to adore, to love, to thank, and to pray. The mysteries of the childhood of Jesus come in regular succession after the festival of Christmas.

The season of Lent draws near. The altars are stripped of their ornaments; the hymns of joy are changed into lamentations. The exhortation to penance becomes more frequent and forcible.

The bitter Passion of Jesus presents itself to the Christian soul, in the most touching and affecting pictures. We accompany in spirit the divine Sufferer from the hall of the Last Supper, to Gethsemane, to Golgotha, and the sepulchre ; the pains and humiliations of the Redeemer become our own ; for each of us can truthfully say : He loved me, and delivered himself for me. (Gal. 2 : 20.)

To the sympathizing Christian, Passion-week is a special season of profound earnestness and silent retreat, of strict recollection and compassionate repentance.

But soon, he rejoices with the Risen Saviour and the Church, on the great festival of the Resurrection. His Alleluias mingle with those of all Christendom, and he joins in them the more gladly, the more effectually he has imitated his risen Lord by a true spiritual resurrection.

The sacred joy of Easter-time continues until, by the Ascension of the Lord, we are reminded that we have become orphans. At the same time, however, the Comforter is promised ; and we prepare for his reception by the holy Novena of Pentecost—those nine days of retreat and prayer, instituted by the Lord himself.

And now, the things of God have come to pass. The Holy Ghost has descended upon the just ones. The most sublime mysteries are accessible to us, as far as it is possible for mortals—the mystery of one God in three divine Persons, the mystery of the Real Presence of Jesus in the holy Sacrament of the Altar.

The Church, guided by the Holy Ghost, fulfils her mission upon earth, and shall continue to do so till the end of time. In like manner, the Pentecost cycle lasts to the end of the ecclesiastical year. The seed of God matures in individual hearts, and everything marches on to perfection, under the powerful assistance of the Giver of all grace.

But not only does our holy Mother gratefully remember

the mysteries of the Redemption, being a Church militant, triumphant, and suffering ; she thinks, also, of the departed ; she dedicates to the blessed and ever-immaculate Virgin, memorial days, and celebrates the mysteries of her participation in the work of Redemption ; she venerates holy men and women, devout youths and innocent children—the elect of God, and places them before our eyes for our imitation. From this host of Saints, the militant Christian chooses patterns for his imitation, intercessors whose protection he supplicates in a special manner.

Alas ! poor child of the world, to whom of the entire life of the Church nothing remains but the calendar chronicling the return of customary holy-days,—the dead names of certain festivals, which to him are, at best, but invitations to greater licentiousness, enjoyment, dress, and idle, foolish things.

Catholic young man ! Show that you are above the every-day life of this world, and recognize a higher relation in the changes of the ecclesiastical year. Take part, exteriorly, in that which so constantly interests and occupies your holy mother, the Church. Accustom yourself, while young, to prepare becomingly for these higher festivals.

Do not forget this : Since you ardently wish to share, one day, in the glory of the Church triumphant, show yourself, here below, her warm friend and adherent, or rather, her faithful, loving son, whose life is so thoroughly cemented and bound up with hers, that he knows no joy other than that which she causes or sanctions.

121.

THE SUNDAYS AND HOLY-DAYS.

"*Why does one day excel another? By the knowledge of the Lord they were distinguished.*" (Ecclus. 33 : 7, 8.)

My son, you mistake very much the purposes which I, the Lord your God, have had in the institution of holy-days. You turn them, too often, into mere days of recreation, and appropriate them to yourself, although they are properly my days.

Lord, is not thy commandment fulfilled by abstaining from servile work, and by hearing Mass, as the Church prescribes?

My son, why are you grudging towards me? Have I not left to you six days, on which you may acquire the necessaries and comforts of life, and pursue your earthly avocation,—on which I ask of you only the ordinary homage of prayer?

True, O Lord, but just because I have exerted myself so much on six days the seventh is so welcome to me for rest and recreation.

My son, you are not forbidden rest and recreation ; and for this reason, these are called days of rest. I said once to my chosen people : Six days you shall do work : the seventh day shall be holy unto you, the sabbath and the rest of the Lord. (Exod. 35 : 2.) But, remember, there is a rest which refreshes body and soul, and a rest which

benefits only the earthly man. Entangled in a thousand temporal affairs, oppressed with cares, incessantly pursued by many occupations, your soul sometimes needs rest; it requires holy leisure to collect herself again, to set many things in order within you, and to revive your intercourse with the world to come.

My son, recognise herein my wisdom and paternal love. I have appointed times which should lead you back into my arms—times which should be especially consecrated to the affair of salvation, the most important, in fact, the only important, business of life.

Know, my son, that this is the cause, in a great measure, of the unspeakably vast amount of moral misery and deep depravity which prevail all over the world, because, on the one hand, labor is uninterrupted by the multitude even on these, my holy-days; and on the other, because by the great majority, these days of rest are changed into days of licentiousness and sin. Yes, for this reason with desolation is all the land made desolate. (Jer. 12 : 11.) No bond unites man any longer with me, his Creator; he sinks completely down into the earthly. On week-days, work, and a thousand cares; on Sundays, idle talk, pleasure, and worldly folly. The future life,—eternity and heaven,—where are they? Alas! it may be said of the Church, her festival days were turned into mourning, her sabbaths into reproach, her honors were brought to nothing. (1. Macc. 1 : 41.) True, frivolous tongues say : Why doth one day excel another, and one light another, and one year another year, when all come of the sun? (Ecclus. 33 : 7.) But know, ye short-sighted children of men : By the knowledge of the Lord they were distinguished, the sun being made, and keeping his commandment. And he ordered the seasons, and holy-days of them : and in them, they celebrated festivals at an hour Some of them God made high and

great days : and some of them he put in the number of ordinary days. (Ecclus. 33 : 8-11.) With much wisdom, God ordained it so, and diversified are the ways of his wisdom !

O Lord ! now, I recognise this truth. Heretofore, I did not sufficiently understand thy command. I was ungrateful, and appropriated to myself what I should, at least, have shared with thee. I was an enemy to my own dearest interest, in permitting so many precious days to pass unprofitably, which could, and should. have been especially devoted to the care of my soul.

I must acknowledge that the Church has often admonished me to devote these days to thee, O Lord . She has called and invited me, by the voice of her sweet-toned bells, to numerous devotional exercises ; she has given me countless opportunities of hearing Mass, of attending sermons, and receiving the holy Sacraments.

Thoughtless, indifferent wretch that I was ! Others refreshed themselves thereat, and derived benefits for their souls ; whilst I permitted mine to starve,—all the while, pursuing hollow, fleeting pleasures, which, alas ! have only too often transformed thy holy-days into very unholy ones, even into days of vice and sin.

Yes, O Lord, I have, in many ways, misunderstood thy all-wise purposes ! How often, have I suffered myself on those very days to be led away by frivolous companions to inordinate gambling, to wicked or dangerous associations, to extravagance, indecencies, debauchery ! How often had I not to repent on such days of the most frightful excesses, and of more and greater sins than I committed all the rest of the week !

And yet, for me, an idler, whose bread was certainly not earned in the sweat of the brow, all this merry-making and recreation were utterly unnecessary !

O Lord ! teach me to spend thy holy-days holily, animated by thy Spirit and that of thy Church !

My son, your docility rejoices my heart, and makes me hope for better things in future. It will be well for you to close each week piously, and begin the new week in a like spirit.

Recollect yourself on Saturday evenings, and the vigils of great feasts, remembering that you stand on the threshold of my especial days.

Be more solicitous to adorn your heart, than your body, for such days.

Say your accustomed prayers more punctually and more fervently on Sundays and holy-days. Hear Mass reverently, devoutly, and with great recollection of spirit. If not prevented by some serious cause, assist at the service in your own parish church. Although you comply with the precept of the Church by hearing a low Mass, it is no more than right or proper that you attend the High Mass, and listen to the sermon.

In the afternoon, go to Vespers and Benediction ; or otherwise, make a visit to the church, in order to devote a longer time to prayer.

The holy-days are especially adapted for the reception of the Sacraments, since they afford you more leisure for preparation and thanksgiving.

If you cannot hear a sermon on such days, do not permit them to pass without reading some spiritual book, or meditating on the truths of salvation.

The rest you take on those days should not be an idle or dangerous one. Your recreations must be proper, decent and moderate. They must neither hinder you from giving to God what is God's, nor unfit you for your work of the ensuing week.

Behold, my son, thus may you spend your Sundays and

holy-days so profitably, tnat they will become to you days of salvation. Blessed is the man that keepeth the sabbath from profaning it, that keepeth his hands from doing any evil. (Is. 56 : 2.) Those who keep my days, and do what is pleasing to me, and observe my covenant, to them will I give in my house, and within my walls, a name and a fame. I will give to them an everlasting name, that will never pass away. (Is. 56 : 4.)

122.

THE WORD OF GOD.

"*He that is of God, heareth the word of God.*" (John 8 : 47.)

The flighty mind of youth would gladly forego all that demands attention, all that is calculated to cause reflection, or, much more, to awaken a serious disposition of mind.

How many young men go voluntarily to hear a sermon ?

To hear the Word of God, to listen to a sermon ?—Bah ! it is fatiguing, intolerable, superfluous !

O foolish, frivolous talk ! Silence, young man, you know not what you say.

Do you, perhaps, know your religion so well, that you no longer require instruction ? Would to God !

And, O my friend, is nothing more than a mere knowledge necessary for salvation ? Action is conditional, and depends on the will ; but from knowing to willing there is a long step. The will needs to be moved, and it is moved, by the living Word of God.

Nowhere else is self-sufficiency more injurious or more culpable, than in matters of salvation.

Have you finished your religious education? Is there nothing more in religion that is worth your knowing? O fool! How do you say: I am wise, and the law of the Lord is with me? Indeed, the lying pen of the scribes hath wrought falsehood. The wise men are confounded, they are dismayed and taken; for they have cast away the word of the Lord, and there is no wisdom in them. (Jer. 8 : 8, 9.)

By hearing the word of God, you are in union with the teaching and governing Church, as, by the participation in the divine service, you are united with the praying and meriting Church. Do not tear asunder this salutary and necessary bond through your own conceit or carelessness.

By means of the spoken word of God, divine revelation is, in a certain sense, continued for us; and there is no doubt that many graces are reserved for those who lend a docile ear to the voice of Christ's authorized preacher.

Who knows what God intends to say to you in this or that sermon,—whether he does not design, just here, to pave the way for your conversion, or to give a new impetus to your sluggish interior life? Would you deprive his grace of the opportunity?

But, you say, there is no precept which binds me under sin to hear a sermon on Sundays and holy-days.

Granted; but there is a precept not to be culpably ignorant in matters of religion; there is a precept to make use of the means of salvation,—and, amongst these, the hearing of the word of God holds a prominent place. It is, moreover, a commandment, not to give scandal, and not to separate one's self from the multitude of devout believers who hear the Church of Christ.

But sermons are so tedious. Young man, it is sad to

hear you speak so ; and it would be still sadder if you spoke the truth.

Alas ! you bear testimony against yourself : for without knowing it, you pronounce your own sentence of condemnation. Listen to the Saviour's words : He that is of God, heareth the word of God ; he, therefore, who does not hear the word of God, who avoids it, who does not love to hear it, to whom it is onerous,—is not of God.

What does it mean, not to be of God ? To whom does he belong who is not of God ?

Do you not see what terrible judgment you pronounce against yourself ?

As wholesome, well-prepared food causes a feeling of discomfort only to those whose health is impaired, so, also, the word of God nauseates only those who are spiritually diseased.

Again, you dishonor the word of God by flying from it.

The idle conversations of men, their shallow jests and witticisms. their foolish babblings and senseless chatter, do not fatigue you, although indulged in every day ; yet the word of God is powerless to captivate your attention once a week for an hour, or even a half-hour .

True, there may be certain occasions when a worldling might take exception to rude or illy-preached sermons,—but to cast odium upon the word of God in general, because of these isolated cases, is rash, imprudent, unjust.

Bring with you to church only a little more faith, and a little less self-conceit, and all those pretexts will vanish.

Have you an aversion to the word of God ? This can only be, because you are averse to the call of grace, because you do not desire to be disturbed in your sinful or slothful way of going.

Change, then, your course of life, and include the sermon, or catechetical instruction, in your regular Sunday exercises of devotion.

When you go to church to hear the word of God, take with you, above everything, a docile heart. When God condescends to make known to us his will, we should open our hearts and minds to his teachings. The Lord is nigh. (Phil. 4 : 5.) Up !—advance to meet him.

Accept what is said, in the spirit of faith, and as proceeding from God's own mouth ; apply it to yourself ; let it sink deeply into your heart ; draw inferences therefrom. Do not leave the house of God without some good resolution corresponding to the sermon. Do as the Mother of Jesus, of whom it is written : But Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart. (Luke 2 : 19.)

Three things are prejudicial to the word of God, and prevent its divine seed from fructifying in our hearts : Hardness, frivolity, worldliness.

The seed of the word of God falls upon a rock. (Luke 8 : 18.)

The seed of the word of God falls by the wayside, and the fowls of the air devour it. (Luke 8 : 12.)

The seed of the word of God falls among the thorns, and the thorns growing up with it, choke it. (Luke 8 : 14.)

Remove these obstacles ; keep away these enemies ; and the word of God will produce fruit in your heart thirty, sixty, yea, a hundred fold. It never remains inactive or idle.

It is a seed ; and if it bring not forth fruit unto salvation, it will produce at least, for you—a responsibility.

It is a two-edged sword wielded by God himself ; it always strikes ; it never returns to its scabbard, without having performed its purpose. If it do not wound unto salvation, it will wound unto damnation.

O thou sword of the Lord, how long wilt thou not be quiet ? Go into thy scabbard, rest and be still. (Jer. 47 : 6.)

No, rest not, go not back into thy scabbard, strike, wound,

cut, spare me not, penetrate into my hard heart; pierce it through! O my God, be not thou silent to me, lest if thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit. (Ps. 27 : 9.)

123.

DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED MOTHER OF GOD.

"*Behold thy mother.*" (John 19 : 27.)

Behold thy Mother, young man!

Yes, Mary is, in a special manner, your Mother.

Does she, perhaps, not know how much you are in need of her help? O, she knows the frailty of your age,—she knows well, that great and manifold dangers menace you.

Mary spent her early youth in the shadow of the sanctuary. There she grew up, thriving more and more gloriously,—that wonderful Lily, whose fragrance drew the Son of God down into this valley of tears.

Mary well knows how hostile this wicked world is to the lovely flower of chastity. Hence, she exerts all her power and influence to preserve this beautiful virtue in her young clients.

Moreover, Mary knows the sublime significance of the time of youth. The furrows made in fresh soil, penetrate deeply. Spring-time decides the harvest.

If Jesus is to rejoice in the mature man, the good must be prepared in the young man. Mary approaches closer to

the young man, the more the success of his future depends upon her present patronage.

Mary loves young people with a particular love. The child Jesus, the boy Jesus, the young man Jesus, was for many years the sole object of her care and love. To transfer this love and care to other young people, constitutes the delight of her maternal heart. There, she is again in her element, as once at Bethlehem and Nazareth. She believes it to be particularly pleasing to God, if now, from heaven's heights, she protects and guards the sacred images of him whom, once upon earth, she protected with her unceasing, motherly care.

And do you know how powerful Mary is?

She is the Mother of God, full of grace, full of merits, the choice of heaven, elevated to the heights of Paradise. She is nearest to the throne of Jesus. She is omnipotence in prayer. Has it ever been heard that any petition of hers has been refused?

Young man, you seek an object to captivate your heart, and engross all your affections? Mary is the mother of fair love, and of fear, and of knowledge, and of holy hope. (Ecclus. 24 : 24.) O thou most amiable Mother, whose immaculate heart fascinated and moved the three divine Persons of the Blessed Trinity to enter into the closest relations with thee!

Moreover, in Mary is all grace of the way and of the truth ; in her is all hope of life and of virtue. (Ecclus. 24 : 25.) Is there any virtue which does not suggest Mary?

She is the pure, inviolate, immaculate Virgin ; for you know that she was conceived without sin.

She is the humble handmaid of the Lord ; remember the message of the Angel.

She is the modest and retiring, the industrious and active Mother ; represent Nazareth to your mind.

She is the ever kind, mild, obliging Virgin ; remember her visit to her cousin Elizabeth.

She is the sympathetic, magnanimous, and generous Queen, as is shown by the marriage-feast of Cana, in Galilee.

She is the compassionate, self-sacrificing, patient Queen of martyrs, Queen of dolors ; behold her standing beneath the cross !

Young man, the virtues which God expects from you, are reflected in and stream forth from, this Mirror of Justice.

And as for true wisdom, Mary is the Seat of Wisdom.

Yes, love Mary, venerate Mary ; have neither rest nor peace until you have acquired a true devotion to Mary.

Do you profess to be a Catholic young man without knowing Mary, without being filled with an enthusiasm for her, without bearing her on your lips, and in your heart ?

It is one of the chief marks of a Catholic Christian to be familiar with the privileges of Mary, and to love her ardently.

And if you ask how your veneration for Mary is to manifest itself exteriorly, I say :

Avoid carefully whatever grieves her, whatever displeases her. Above all things, impurity is an abomination to her.

Often reflect upon Mary's dignity and sublimity ; upon her grandeur, especially, as Mother of God ; upon her virtues and sanctity. Frequently bring before your mind those of her virtues which most adorn young men, and endeavor to imitate them.

Pray daily to her. Say some particular prayer in her honor, every day, at a certain time. Keep her festivals ; celebrate them in the spirit of the Church, and, if possible, go to Communion on them.

If an opportunity offers to be enrolled in one of her Sodalities or Confraternities, neglect not to embrace it, and punctually fulfil the obligations you thereby take upon yourself.

In all your necessities, and especially, in your temptations, have recourse to Mary, ask her protection, and look to her for help and assistance.

Do not suffer the honor of Mary to be abused or insulted in your presence. If such should occur, the son must arise to protect the glory of his Mother, and ward off from her every attack of open or concealed adversaries.

Remember, above all, that the chief thing is to persevere faithfully in whatever you have undertaken for Mary, be it ever so little.

O friend, that you might experience in yourself what wonderful effects a well-grounded devotion to that good Mother is able to produce in youthful hearts! Truly, in her is all hope of life and of virtue. (Ecclus. 24 : 25.) She is your mother in the truest and sweetest sense of the word; be you her child, also, in the true and full sense of the word.

In venerating Mary with all the affection of your heart, you fulfil the most ardent desire of the Church, imitate the example of all the Saints, and are in union with the thoughts, feelings, and actions of the whole Catholic world, to whom, after God, Mary is everything.

Begin, then, and learn to love Mary.

O fair Morning Star! (Apoc. 22 : 16.) O star of my dawning life, shine brightly down into the twilight of this deceitful world! Shine clearly forth upon the rocks and shoals wherewith my youthful inexperience is threatened with danger and destruction!

Look down with a friendly and encouraging eye upon me, a young man, surrounded by dangers,—upon me, a poor

young mariner, just setting sail in a frail bark, which already begins to rock and dash wildly to and fro upon the stormy waves.

Shine out clearly upon the Better shore—upon that harbor of everlasting peace, where no storms arise, and over which the clear arch of heaven is for ever spanned. May my sighs and longings ascend thither, whilst I steer my timid bark straight to that holy haven!

O star of my youth, brilliant and lovely star! I follow thee! How can I go astray in trusting to thee? How despond, whilst lifting my eye up to thee? How miss the goal, when I have chosen thee, O Mary, my Mother, for my guide?

124.

THE HOLY GUARDIAN ANGEL.

"*Behold I will send my angel;...take notice of him, and hear his voice.*" (Exod. 23 : 20, 21.)

O, that the veil which hides the supernatural from us, would fall from our eyes!

A prince of heaven, sent for my protection, is always near me! He goes before me, and accompanies me in all my ways!

Yes, God's goodness is so great to me, that he commands one of those illustrious spirits, that stand before his throne, to be my companion and protector through life.

It is an article of faith that Angels are deputed to be the protectors of men. Take heed, says our Saviour, that you despise not one of these little ones : for I say to you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father who is in heaven. (Matt. 18 : 10.)

In this protection of the Angels, God has given us an excellent means unto salvation.

Not to speak of the solicitude with which they watch over us, of the efficacy of their intercession with God in our behalf, this thought : I am near a heavenly spirit, must certainly have a salutary influence upon men.

His proximity makes me know that this life is a journey, and reminds me of my eternal destiny and of my heavenly home.

His proximity fills me with reverence. If the presence of respectable people of mental and moral superiority is able to restrain me, to keep me within the bounds of propriety,—how much more will the consciousness of the continual presence of a heavenly prince preserve in me purity of morals, dignity of action, fervor of efforts.

His proximity reminds me of the value of my soul.

It is a lasting proof of the inexhaustible love of my God, who places at my disposal everything conducive to my salvation : inanimate things, rational beings, his heavenly messengers.

The nearness of my Guardian Angel gives me an insight into virtues, which are most necessary to me, but whose practice, nevertheless, is for me often most difficult.

Angels occupy themselves with us men,—with the high and low, with the respected and the despised, with the rich and the poor, with the happy and the miserable,—yea, even with the despisers of their services and examples. What humility !

The Angels tarry upon earth, and still do not neglect

their homages before the throne of God. What indefatigability in the Lord's service !

The Angels continue to guard even the wicked and the sinful, and to move them to amendment, as long as the Lord commands it. What obedience ! What patience !

The presence of my good Angel reminds me of my bounden duty to avoid giving scandal or bad example to others. To do evil to my neighbor, to seduce him, to scandalize him,—is not this to grieve his holy Angel, and to provoke his righteous indignation ?

Yes,—elevating thought : An angel of God is always about me ! He sees what are my needs ; he represents me before God ; he mediates graces for me, excites good thoughts in me, warns me to be prepared for approaching dangers, inspires me with courage, covers me with his wings in time of peril, prevents me from dashing my foot against a stone (Ps. 90 : 12), and helps me to walk harmlessly upon the asp and the basilisk. He supports me when I waver ; he refreshes me when I am weary and fatigued ; he counsels, he cautions, he warns, he consoles ; he is my guide, my friend, my brother.

Yes,—instructive truth : An angel of God is always near me. He is, therefore, the witness of all that I think, speak, and do,—he, the pure, celestial spirit ! Shall I, then, grieve him ? Shall I drive him away from me ?

O Spirit of faith, why art thou so dead within me !

Why do I not see my holy angel through your clear-sighted eyes ? Why do I seldom, or never, think of him ? Why am I so insensible to his benefits ? Why do I not listen to his warnings ? Why do I pay no attention to his counsels ? Why do I not recommend myself to his protection ? Why am I so little concerned about his presence ? Why do I not make good use of his society ? Why not rejoice in his lovely company ? Why do I not make him the confi-

dant of my heart? Why do I give him no commissions for heaven?

O, we have been rebellious to the light, and have not returned by his paths. (Job 24 : 13.) The gifts of God have become insignificant to us; we are hardly conscious of possessing them, much less do we make use of them.

Henceforth, young man, act differently, and arouse your slumbering faith.

Behold, says God, I will send an angel who shall go before thee, and keep thee in thy journey, and bring thee into the place that I have prepared. Take notice of him, and hear his voice, and do not think him one to be contemned: for he will not forgive when thou hast sinned, and my name is in him. (Exod. 23 : 20, 21.)

O friend, the path of youth is slippery! Bear up bravely!

O friend, the adversaries that threaten your youth are many and fierce. Woe to him that is alone. (Eccles. 4 : 10.) Seek confederates.

O friend, the journey of life becomes more and more serious, and, perhaps, a long way still lies before you. Make provision, and hold fast to your companion and guide, your Guardian Angel!

125.

THE TWO BANNERS.

"*If the Lord be God, follow him.*" (3. Kings 18 : 21.)

Come, young man, and behold, as from a height, an awfully grand spectacle.

In view of Babylon, the abominable abode of confusion and corruption of morals, Lucifer and his nocturnal hosts

have pitched their camp. There, upon his throne, inflated with pride, sits the prince of darkness, whilst high in the air flutters his gloomy-looking banner. Thither, the slayers of human souls come for their murderous watch-word ; there, plans are laid against Jesus, the Anointed, and his faithful adherents ; hellish darts are distributed for attack, and infernal snares prepared for the unwary.

Approach that council of war, and hark how these hellish powers speak of you, my young man, in particular. He who wins the young, wins the world ! cries Satan. Away, then, and capture yonder innocent youth ! Allure him, take advantage of his inexperience. Drag him by force, overwhelm his weakness ; outwit, flatter, threaten, terrify him. He who wins the young, wins the world ; for he has the future family, the future state, the future generations of men. Here is Money—let it glitter before their eyes ; here is Honor—throw it as a bait before them ; here is Pleasure,—yes, pleasure by all means. O make it sweet, very sweet and attractive,—it is an all-powerful bait ! We must have the young ! Satan cries aloud once more. Youth is the human race in the germ, the kingdom of God, (my hereditary enemy), in embryo.—Tear the young people away from God ! Down with them into carnal things, into gross sensuality ! Catch them, throw your snares around them ! Set your traps, hold up before them—until, blinded, they cast themselves into your arms,—the fascinating motto on our banner : Enjoyment ! enjoyment ! enjoyment ! Come, let us enjoy the good things that are present, and let us speedily use the creatures as in youth. (Wisd. 2 : 6.)

Young man ! do you not see, do you not hear, that this conspiracy is especially against you ?

But, God be praised ! there is also another camp ; and of this, too, we shall speak.

In the plains of Jerusalem, the City of peace and salvation, there is the camp of Jesus and his army of light. Friendly and charming, he stands in the midst of his own. His whole being breathes love ; his glance radiates love; his voice is full of love.

Come to me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you. (Matt. 11 : 28.) It is not money and honor that will satisfy you, nor intoxicating pleasures that can make you happy Blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are the peace-makers, blessed are they that suffer and are persecuted, blessed are they that mourn—but blessed, above all, are the pure of heart, who neither know, nor desire to know, what sin is ! O go, my faithful followers, tell this to all men, and repeat it unceasingly, especially to the young. Detach them from the earth, enlighten them as to the real worth, or rather worthlessness, of all earthly things. Direct their thoughts heavenward ; inspire them with a love of the supernatural, the heavenly, the eternal. March on, then, wrestle, fight, save all whom you can—especially the young, from whose service my heavenly Father derives so much honor and glory.

Closer and closer, the holy legions crowd together, and press around Jesus, whilst above them, towers on high, calmly and gloriously, sacred and brilliant, the banner of the Cross, and on it we read the watch-word : Self-denial ! Avoid, suffer. In your patience, you shall possess your souls. (Luke 21 : 19.) If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. (Matt. 16 : 24.)

Thus Christ and Satan, righteousness and sin, light and darkness, grace and perdition, heaven and hell, are diametrically opposed to each other.

Mighty camps, countless people, terrible sounds of war, wrathful, implacable hatred, which will only be extinguished

with the destruction of the world itself on the Last Day.

How do you stand, young man, with regard to these opposing banners?

Calling yourself a Christian, you ought, of necessity, cling to the standard of the Cross.

Yet, on the other hand, he who commits sin, espouses the cause of the Evil One, stands on the side of Satan, even though he wear the livery of Christ.

He who loves the world,—he who shrinks from self-denial, he who seeks only earthly things,—pleasures, ease, and comfort,—does not belong to the army of the Christian crusaders, though he should bear upon shield and helmet the sign of the Redeemer.

Is this warfare to cost you nothing, O Christian young man? Will you fight neither for yourself, nor for the kingdom of Christ, nor for the welfare of mankind? Ah, then you are a bad soldier,—nay, you are no soldier at all! Cast him out of the sacred phalanx! take away from him the consecrated arms and the badge of honor! Slave of Satan! let him henceforth bear upon his brow and neck: The mark of the beast. (Apoc. 19: 20.) Coward, traitor, branded for eternity! would you like to know how near you approach, or how far you recede from the standard of the Cross?

Its motto is Self-denial,—this, you know. Ask yourself, then: How far do I practise self-denial and mortification? The more sincerely and thoroughly you deny and renounce yourself, the nearer you are to the centre of the army of light,—the closer you come to the holy banner, yea, to the divine Leader himself. The less you mortify yourself, the nearer you approach the rear guard, the extreme outposts of the soldiers of the cross; yes, you draw closer and closer to the army of the enemy.

The more inordinately you desire the possession of the

goods of this earth,—honors and pleasures,—or find your satisfaction therein, the nearer you are to Satan's banner, yea, to Satan himself, whose whole aim is self-gratification, self-interest, selfishness, in a word, self-deification. I will be like the Most High. (Is. 14 : 14.) Come, let us enjoy the good things that are present. Let us crown ourselves with roses. (Wisd. 2 : 6, 8.)

Examine yourself, then young man, look into your own heart.

A decision in this matter is absolutely necessary ; our Lord himself says it : He that is not with me, is against me. (Luke 11 : 23.)

You may have made your choice before now. But how near are you now to the Cross ? How near, to the standard of the devil ?

May the reproach of Holy Writ never be applied to you : How long do you halt between two sides ? If the Lord be God, follow him, really and truly, with body and soul.

126.

A PICTURE OF WAR.

" *Therefore, lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees.*" (Hebr. 12 : 12.)

To battle for God !—the call goes out to every man. The good Captain, Christ, addresses every human being. So, also, does the bad leader, Satan. The kingdom of God is to be established among us ; we, ourselves, are to constitute it.

There are certain periods in life, wherein the call is more imperious, and more vehemently urges us, individually, to a decision.

Half-way between the rival camps of Jerusalem and Babylon, a young man lies, stretched out indolently upon the green sward. He looks up to the blue vault of heaven; he rejoices at the gentle breeze; he hearkens to the merry song of the birds, and the peaceful splash of the brooklet that flows near by. Carelessly, he plays with the lovely field-flowers, or lets the smooth pebbles slide slowly through his fingers.

He is suddenly aroused from his dreams by a far-off tumult. He looks around him right and left. An army approaches, half concealed by clouds of dust. Whither shall he fly? He is afraid—he trembles. He surmises his danger; and yet, he cannot quit the childish sport which fascinates him; he does not feel sufficient strength to rouse himself.

A warrior rushes towards him, and calls upon him to take part in the battle. Quick, he cries, put on your armor, and follow me; eternity is at stake! And the soldier of light holds before the affrighted young man a glittering coat of mail, gives him a flashing sword, and urges him to haste pointing out to him the approaching enemy.

Alas! irresolute, as he is, a stranger to earnestness, disinclined to brave action, the effeminate coward pushes aside the proffered weapons, and suffers them to fall powerless from his weak hand.

Sadly, the heavenly warrior departs, taking with him the despised gift.

But behold, already this whimpering, miserable coward is surrounded by soldiers from the camp of Babylon! Come with us! they cry, extending menacingly, and yet alluringly, their fiery weapons towards the trembling creature.

Finding that he delays to follow them, these infernal huntsmen cast out the lasso, and drag him off with them in mocking exultation.

My friend, are there not many such miserable caricatures of young men to be met with between Babylon and Jerusalem? Yes, indeed, their name is legion. Irresolute, cowardly, effeminate, childish souls, living only in dreams and sentimentality, to whom their own rest, comfort, ease, and convenience are above all else; who do not know the value of life, trifle away and squander their precious time of warfare upon earth, apply themselves to nothing serious, prosecute nothing with earnestness; who reject the proffered armor of grace and virtue, do no violence to themselves, and aspire to no moral elevation, through fear of the little effort it might cost them.

Well then! soldier, knight, you are determined not to be—then, be a slave; deliverer, you will not be—then, be a destroyer! You shun the light—well then, bury yourself in darkness; you will not become warm in regard to the things of God—then, burn with the evil fires of hell; you will not conquer—for in the army of Jesus, he who desires it, can always be a conqueror—then, succumb to the servitude of Satan. But remember, ah! woe, the battle decides an eternity in heaven or in hell!

Not in vain does the Apostle exhort us wnen he says: Lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees. (Hebr. 12 : 12.)

And again: Put you on the armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the snares of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and to stand in all things perfect (1. Ephes. 6 : 11-13.)

127

THREE DIVISIONS OF THE GREAT ARMY

"*Labor as a good soldier of Christ*" (2. Tim. 2 : 3.)

Are there any gradations, any regulations, as to rank in the army of Jesus?

Certainly. The chief aim of the soldier of Christ is the destruction, the overthrow, of the kingdom of sin. The more energetically, however, each one carries on this work of annihilation, the more decisive means he employs, the more vigorously he labors at the erection, extension, fortification, and perfection of the kingdom of God, the kingdom of grace, virtue and holiness; the more he turns from evil, to good, the more he strives for everything opposed to sin and moral depravity,—the more exalted will be his position in the army of God, the dearer he will be to the divine Commander, and the more claim he will have to the bright crown reserved for the valiant victor.

Behold, O Lord, say some, I detest mortal sin with my whole heart. I consider it truly the greatest of all evils, in fact, the only evil in the world. My every effort is to avoid it. And if I were offered earthly kingdoms at the price of even one mortal sin, or if I were threatened with the greatest tortures:—No, O my God, I will never think of falling away from thee, if thou assistest me! It is good to adhere to my God. (Ps. 72 : 28.) Who shall separate me from thy love and grace? (Rom. 8 : 35.) I shall always

keep thy law, for ever and ever (Ps. 118 : 44) ; for only in this way, can I escape eternal perdition, fulfil the object of my creation, and attain my destiny. The very moment that this hatred of mortal sin departs from my heart, I already stand outside the rank of the army of God, and, having basely deserted my flag, shall be involved in the ultimate perdition of all the servants of sin and the whole army of the devil.

Thus some speak. They know, there is question of eternal life, or eternal death : heaven, or hell.

But who are those favored few that circle the closest around Jesus and his holy banner ?

O pure souls, you detest even venial sin. No earthly good, no allurement, no threat, could make you negligent in the fulfilment of even the most insignificant of the divine commandments.

Commit a venial sin knowingly and wilfully ? No, never ! Is it not also an offense against God ? Rather, O great and infinite Lord, we are so unfeignedly devoted to thy service, that our soul inclines to nothing save thy pleasure. We are indifferent to poverty and riches, honors and insults, sufferings and comforts, sickness and health, a short or long life —provided thy holy will be fulfilled, thy glory increased, and our souls ever brought nearer to perfection.

Thus, speak those noble and disinterested souls, who, in heroic sentiments, rank as high above the ordinary Christian, as the free and generous defender of the Fatherland towers above the cringing, selfish mercenary.

But I perceive, there are still other, and nobler, champions ! O how bright is their armor ! how their keen-edged swords flash ! how their majestic forms tower above the common soldiers !

Knights of the Cross, chosen band, courageous but little flock, confidants of the heavenly Captain in his holy designs,

instruments of his divine prowess,—selected to cover the Blessed One with your bodies, and in whose hands, holy banners flutter ! Illustrious, renowned, much-to-be-envied spirits ! O tell us what has made you so distinguished ? how came you to this place of honor ?

We want only Jesus, reply these high-minded souls. For his sake, we count all things but dung. (Phil. 3 : 8.) And though, with a full assurance of our salvation, we could have enjoyed the goods of this earth—though we could be rich in honors, prosperity, and comfort, without the loss of our souls, yet we preferred to be poor with our poor Jesus, to suffer with our suffering Jesus, to be lowly with our lowly Jesus. We wish for nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified. (1. Cor. 2 : 2.) For him, we gave what we had and were, could have had, and have been ; we gave what was ours, nay, we gave ourselves, saying : To me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. (Phil. 1 : 21.)

Have you never read of Saints who, for Jesus' sake, left all ? Behold, these are they, who, in the army of Jesus occupy so prominent a place.

Such are the grades in the army of Christ. Choose your place, O young man, but see to it, that, through want of faithful allegiance, lack of love and devoted attachment to your Saviour, you do not stand in the lowest grade of that grand army, in the one farthest removed from the great enlivening, soul-protecting Centre !

Choose your position, young man, and choose it for your whole life, with this proviso, alone, to daily advance nearer to Jesus, if your heavenly Commander should consider you worthy of such an honor.

Once at your post, there fight, there labor, as a good, brave soldier of Jesus Christ. (2. Tim. 2 : 3.)

128.

THE FUTURE AND THE PRESENT.

"*My son, do thou nothing without counsel, and thou shalt not repent what thou hast done.*" (Ecclus. 32 : 24.)

Soon, perhaps, young man, you may arrive at the cross-roads of life.

The paths diverge,—one running here, another, there.

The time of general preparation is past ; that of the particular approaches, and you must know to what station of life you are, ere long, to belong.

Decisive moment ! Choice, upon which an eternity depends

Yes, young man, upon your choice of a state of life, your eternity certainly depends.

Certain obligations are attached to every condition of life, on the performance or non-performance of which, is based a favorable or unfavorable sentence after death.

In order to faithfully and meritoriously discharge the duties of my calling, two things are necessary :

1. A supernatural, and

2. A natural, ability for my vocation.

The supernatural qualification is nothing else than the grace of vocation. It is more than a sufficient, it is an abundant, help from above, which, protecting, guiding, and encouraging, assists and strengthens me in the performance of my special duties, guards me in special dangers, and sustains me in difficulties and temptations.

To this grace of vocation, I can only lay claim, if the state I choose is the one intended for me by God. If I force myself into a state for which he did not intend me, I thereby relinquish that special assistance which would have been attached to my rightful vocation.

As to the natural qualification, such is given, on the one side, by the talents and faculties which fit me for a certain state, and on the other, by an encouraging consciousness, founded on this conviction: I am in the right place; I am where God placed me; I am doing his holy will; I can, therefore, count on his help.

Yes, this consciousness can justly be called a sort of natural qualification. If, without asking light from on high, I have made a hasty choice of a state of life—have entered, or pushed myself into relations which are never approved of by God, nor, after due deliberation, even by myself,—grief, sorrow, regret, repentance, may so darken my mind and heart, that the duties of my state suffer considerably, and every useful effort is checked.

If I labor with pleasure within the sphere of my vocation; if I am strengthened by the conviction, that I am in the right place; if the thought comforts me, that God is pleased with the direction of my life,—my every action has force and power, and all that I do is fresher, better more durable, and more fruitful of good results.

You cannot dispense with either the natural or supernatural qualification, young man—least of all, with the supernatural. Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. (Ps. 126 : 1.) And how foolish it would be, to begin to build a tower without first counting the costs, and calculating whether there is money enough at hand to finish the work. (Luke 14 : 28.)

It is beyond all doubt that very many are eternally lost in this or that state, and on account of this or that state,

who, in another state, would have been saved. They are not equal to the requirements of the state they have chosen ; they do not fulfil their duties ; they neglect their obligations, and when called to an account by God, they find their damnation.

Yes, how many are now in hell, who, whilst on earth, were in positions unapproved by God ; and how many are now in heaven, who would be in hell, if, here below, they had not chosen the vocation for which God designed them, and to which he invited them ?

He who blindly enters into any state of life ; he who is guided only by temporal considerations in so important a matter, and permits himself to be governed by external circumstances ; he who does not regard the will of God, and does not assure himself of the divine approval in an affair so decisive for the salvation of his soul,—forestalls God's holy prerogatives, and frustrates his loving intentions and designs for the salvation of each of his creatures. He commits an act of injustice to human society.

He who is not called to a certain state of life, and who, so to say, enters it forcibly, and against his inclinations, resembles a dislocated limb, which pains and injures the whole body, because it is in an improper position.

Such a one causes incalculable damage to himself, because he condemns himself to an unnatural position, in which his faculties and talents either utterly lack development, or find, at best, an imperfect and unfruitful expansion, far removed from that easy and prolific development appointed them by the Creator and Dispenser of all good gifts. Above all, such a one inconsiderately or maliciously risks the highest and most important of all his concerns, —his immortal soul.

However youthful levity may regard this choice of a state of life—however indifferently and arbitrarily many

young men may treat this matter—do you, at least, my dear friend, hold fast to this conviction, that much, very much, perhaps everything, depends upon your choice of vocation —time, eternity, heaven, hell, joy, torments !

Consider, therefore, with God, whither to direct your steps. The paths of life are not a matter of indifference. Better is counsel before the deed, than difficult healing after haste. Do nothing without counsel, and thou shalt not repent what thou hast done. (Ecclus. 32 : 24.)

129.

WITH GOD IS COUNSEL

"*And he shall direct his counsel, and his knowledge, and in his secrets shall he meditate.*" (Ecclus. 39 : 10.)

Why should I consult God as to a choice of vocation ? Is it not a matter of indifference to him what state of life I embrace ? Am I not free, in this matter, to decide myself, according to my own pleasure ?

You are free, perfectly free, young man,—that is, you have the power to determine for yourself and to choose this or that state—but either to your advantage, or disadvantage. But remember, that the rule of our will can only be God's will ; every conscious and wilful departure from the latter, is an infamous, a criminal, abuse of liberty.

As to its being a matter of indifference to God what state you embrace, do you suppose he is indifferent in general, as to whether or not his holy will is known and done

by us, or whether or not we attain the end of our creation?

God is our Father; it is his prerogative to assign to each one his place in this great human family.

God is our Captain; to him, it belongs to point out to each soldier his post in the army.

God is our Ruler;—the prince calls the subjects near his throne, appoints their places to them at a distance from him, where they are to serve him for the welfare of the state and for the glory of the crown.

If everything here below must be referred to God, must be connected with him, our last End and Aim, so a setting aside of God is wholly unimaginable, when there is question of that vocation which is so essentially connected with our eternal end and aim.

O my God, I perceive it plainly! Thou must be my counsellor in this highly important affair. I cannot, I dare not, turn aside from thee! I must take pains to learn thy holy will in this momentous matter.

But how shall I know it?

God has sufficient ways and means, whereby to communicate his holy will to us.

Can he not enlighten your understanding, and impart to it that knowledge which no longer permits you to doubt of your vocation to a certain state?

Can he not operate upon your will, so that it inclines to that state which he indicates to you, as being the best for you?

Of course, you must not expect extraordinary manifestations of the divine will; neither are they necessary. Deliberation and prayer will conduct you in the affair of your vocation to a thoroughly sufficient certainty.

First, then, cast a glance at yourself. I have such and such talents and faculties; of such a sort, is my character; these are my good, these, my bad, qualities; this is my

predominant passion ; it is associated with this or that tendency ; these are the inclinations of my youthful heart ; on these rocks I ran the risk of shipwreck, or actually suffered loss.

Review, moreover, the different vocations in detail. This state has certain obligations ; that state, certain duties. Both are beset with dangers that threaten the soul ; but in each, God offers me certain means to overcome all difficulties and temptations.

And now, apply these considerations to yourself individually,—to your own dispositions, to your particular needs of soul and body. In this choice of a vocation there is question of what will best secure your spiritual and temporal welfare, make you a useful member of society, and open to you a blessed pathway to eternal felicity.

With these considerations, unite prayer — prayer for light, prayer for courage,—for God may require sacrifices. At this time, receive the holy Sacraments more frequently than usually ; and lay your concern before our Lord more especially at holy Communion.

If you have confidence in some spiritual man (your confessor, for instance), to whom the glory of God and your real good are dear, who knows you thoroughly, and is well acquainted with your weakness, and good qualities, with your past and present,—consult him about this matter in all sincerity ; his counsel will be of great benefit to you.

Neglect not to consult, also, your parents,—especially, if you can rely upon their impartiality, and need not fear from them any unlawful constraint.

During the time that your mind is occupied with your choice of a vocation, live a purer life than ever. Sin darkens the understanding, oppresses the heart, unfits it for good ; sin prevents heroic resolutions, and seeks easy ways.

Sin, yes sin, frustrates many noble vocations, stifles in the germ many sublime aspirations.

Finally, answer to yourself, with calmness and conscientiousness, the following questions ; they are weighty, and will absolutely lead to truth :—

If I were now upon my death-bed, what state would I wish to have chosen ?

For what choice shall I be able at the judgment-seat of God to answer most successfully ?

If I had a friend whom I knew as well, and loved as sincerely, as I do myself,—whose welfare would be as near and dear to my heart as my own,—what state of life would I recommend to him, in case he asked my advice ?

To what state, do the inspirations of God and a reasonable inclination founded on religion and faith, repeatedly invite me ?

Yes, young man, take time to reflect well on all this. The choice of a vocation is generally decisive for one's whole after-life. The very words "state of life" mean something durable, stable, continuous. A vocation often decides our eternal Hereafter.

Inconsideration on this point cannot but be full of results ; a mistake in this matter can, perhaps, never be repaired, an error, never be corrected. Do not trust like a gambler to a lucky throw of the dice, but act like a rational, prudent man, who asks, and takes, counsel from on high.

O pray, pray fervently to Almighty God, that he may direct your way in truth. (Ecclus. 37 : 19.) In every undertaking, and more especially, in one so important as the choice of a state of life, consult, and take advice, about what is true and best, and according to the result of your deliberations and consultations, make your choice.

130.

BETHLEHEM.

"*And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.*
(John 1 : 14.)

The most essential and necessary frame of mind for him who is about to choose his vocation, is that holy equanimity, which is resolved neither to anticipate God's will, nor to bend the known will of God to its own.

This equanimity extends to all states of life, and, in anticipation, is satisfied with that which heaven shall indicate as best to be chosen.

In order to establish this equanimity in us, and to prevent disorder in our choice of such means as may rightly conduct us to our eternal destiny, nothing is more efficacious than contemplation of the sublime example of Christ. His judgment of the things of this world, his unreserved resignation to the will of his heavenly Father, are highly important lessons, and indispensable counsellors in so decisive an affair as the choice of a state of life.

The heroic deeds of our King and Leader begin in Bethlehem. There, he commences to unfurl his banner, and to put its motto : Suffer ! Avoid ! into practice.

The Word was made flesh, the Son of God was made man, and dwelt among us. (John 1 : 14.)

God becomes man clothing himself at the same time

with human nature, with all the weakness and miseries of man.

But this did not satisfy the love of our God.

Jesus became a child, a poor, suffering child.

By his own free will, he places himself in that condition of helplessness, of dependence, and humiliation, which awaits every ordinary child of Adam, on the threshold of this temporal life. He chooses for himself a poor mother, who, in spite of all the love and care with which she would fain have surrounded her dearly-beloved Child, has only poor swaddling-clothes for him, and a little hay and straw for a bed.

He ordains that time and place, that circumstances of all kinds, work together, in order to make his entrance into the world very hard and painful.

The obdurate hearts of men, the inclemency of the season, the inhospitable stable, the hard crib, the abandonment, the company of an ox and an ass,—pains, privations, humiliations, in abundance, which none but a boundless love could choose, an infinite charity endure !

O lowliness, ennobled by the choice of my Redeemer !

O poverty, enriched by God !

O sufferings, changed into sweetness by the preference which Jesus gives you before all earthly joys !

How dost thou put my niggardliness to shame, O most liberal Redeemer ! I would fain serve thee, but without sacrifices—serve thee in honors, in prosperity, in ease and comfort ! I would like to do thy will, but it must not lead me into paths that are painful to flesh and blood, sown with labor and exertions, or hedged around with adversities.

If the gentlest inspiration moves me to make sacrifices, to do violence to myself, to restrain my self-love, my sensuality, my inclination to acquire, and my desire to enjoy, the goods of this world,—my good-will is exhausted, my

courage vanishes, my love grows cold, my zeal is extinguished ; the hand scarcely opened as yet in charity, draws back, and is closed.

Once more, young man, go to the crib, and look at Jesus.

Here, you have actions, not words.

Do not lose sight of this,—they are the actions of Eternal Wisdom. At the bottom of them, lie views which do not admit even of the possibility of an error.

They are actions of eternal love. They proceed solely from the design to make mankind happy, to heal its morbid desire after earthly happiness.

They are actions of eternal sanctity. They are to restore to the heavenly Father an honor of which the threefold idolatry of the world, the flesh, and the devil have outrageously robbed him.

Thus acts Jesus—and—for me. What have I, hitherto, done for Jesus? What do I intend to do for him in the future?

Young man, at the crib of Jesus, do you not perceive that all this solely depends on the will of God? Do you not perceive that, in sacrifice, there is also happiness ; or rather, that sacrifice, alone, procures true, lasting happiness in proportion as it destroys the sinful Ego ? From the beautiful features of the heavenly Child Jesus, does not the perfect day of the sweetest heavenly peace beam forth, such as the only-begotten Son always enjoys in the bosom of the Father ?

Yes, at the crib, rectify your prejudices, which you may, perhaps, have imbibed with your mother's milk—prejudices against sufferings, privations, lowliness, sacrifice. Learn there, at least, to acquire that equanimity which does not exclude that which is bitter and repugnant to nature, provided it promote the service of God, and help to attain the final aim ; and which does not shrink before the more se-

rious circumstances of life, or those which require greater efforts and sacrifices.

131.

NAZARETH.

"*I am poor and in labors from my youth.*" (Ps. 87 : 16.)

Up to his thirtieth year, Jesus remains in silent retirement at Nazareth, and is subject to Mary and Joseph (Luke 2 : 51), helping his Foster-father, by his labor, to acquire the necessary sustenance.

The Infant Jesus grows into a boy, the boy becomes a young man, the young man reaches manhood,—and the world knows nothing of him ; it surmises not that he already lives upon the earth, for whom the earth has waited for four thousand years.

Thus, the Saviour of mankind already fulfils what he shall teach later on : Learn of me, for I am humble of heart. (Matt. 11 : 29.)

He does not teach to create worlds, nor to work miracles ; to raise the dead, nor to walk upon the waves of the sea ; to astonish the people by hitherto unheard-of or unseen things ; —he teaches to obey, to want, to suffer, to be humble ; to live retired, industrious, unknown,—for days, months, and years. I am poor, and in labors from my youth. (Ps. 87 : 16.)

A life of poverty, Jesus lives in Nazareth. Foster-son of a carpenter, he knows nothing of affluence and luxury, nothing of the pomp and pride of earth.

Painful is the life that Jesus leads in Nazareth. He works hard, the sweat drips from the brow of the God-Man, and, fatigued after his day's work, the divine Youth lies down to take his nightly rest upon a hard bed Labor goes hand in hand with privation, and each renders the other mutually more wearisome.

A lowly life, Jesus leads in Nazareth. He obeys not only Mary, but also Joseph ; they are only creatures, and he is the Creator and Conqueror of the world, the great Wonder-worker, who has power to make even the dead return to life. Jesus lives in the most unassuming manner, in retirement ; there is nothing singular or extraordinary in his carriage, speech or gesture,—no miracles, no prophecies.

We long for publicity. Manifest thyself to the world ! (John 7 : 4) resounds in our ears, and is re-echoed in our hearts. It is never too early, so it seems, for us to appear in the arena of life. To exhibit ourselves upon the world's stage, is our highest ambition. And this thought exercises a particular influence on our choice of a vocation ; the desire of worldly honor, alone, often determines for us our future.

But—what is of consequence in the end ? That we do the will of God. Only that is great which is done because God wills it, and as he wills it. Little, insignificant, vain, is everything that is destitute of higher reference, that is outside of what is willed by God, that proceeds from low, earthly motives,—that aims at self, stops at self, is consumed in self.

Jesus is subject ; he works, he lives a hidden life. Thus, his heavenly Father willed it, this suffices ; and over and above this, Jesus seeks nothing : I seek not my own will, but the will of him that sent me. (John 5 : 30.) By suffering and waiting, Jesus fulfils his divine office of Mediator

even in the retirement of Nazareth, and makes these long years, as it were, a time of preparation for his future public life.

What God ordains for you, young man, alone is good and salutary for you. To force yourself into a prominent rôle is dangerous. If you do not succeed, the disgrace is so much the greater, the results more fraught with annoyance, the responsibilities so much heavier. And how can success be yours, if God do not design it for you, if his blessing be wanting, if, perhaps, even your qualification for your office be only an imaginary one ? Even granting that you succeed, and stand before men in grandeur and honor, greeted with shouts of deafening applause,—what is it that gives to actions true greatness, true nobility, value, fulness, merit, before God ? The interior, the spirit, the fulfilment of the will of God.

O humble, industrious, and patient young man of Nazareth ! O infinitely wise God-Man ! teach me to will what the heavenly Father wills, and in the choice of a vocation to listen only to the call from above. Teach me to love what thou hast loved ; teach me to renounce what thou hast renounced and condemned.

And now, in the days of my youth, O, that I might think, speak, and act like thee ; and thus, prepare myself for the future. Every round of the ladder of life, as I ascend it, has been sanctified by thy holy footsteps. There is no foot-print that I may not tread in, no track which I may not pursue. Never can I excuse myself on the plea that the path is too steep, too giddy, too difficult for man. Can I not obey ? Can I not work and improve the present ? Can I not live a retired, hidden life, and content myself with the divine approval alone ?

132.

GOLGOTHA.

"*Thou hast loved me, and delivered thyself for me.*"
(Gal. 2 : 20.)

The sorrows of Gethsemane have been endured. Annas and Caiphas, Pilate and Herod, have sat in judgment ; the scourging, the crowning with thorns, the way of the cross, the crucifixion,—all are over.

On the wood of ignominy, between two malefactors, hangs the Saviour of mankind, suffering the most excruciating torments. Round about him, a curious crowd sways to and fro, unsympathizing, mocking, and blaspheming.

The precious blood trickles down upon the earth. The limbs of the divine Sufferer quiver convulsively with pain. His tired head seeks in vain for a spot on which to rest. His eye sees nothing but what torments it : raging, bitter enemies, timid friends, a barbarous rabble, an ungrateful, frantic, cruel multitude. The ear hears nothing but what is offensive to it : curses, imprecations, expressions of malicious joy, and outcries for revenge.

O Lord, increase my faith. (Luke 17 : 5.) Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God. (Matt. 16 : 16.)

Yes, this crucified, naked, despised, abandoned, dying Victim—is God ! Love for us has moved him to endure all this ; his solicitude for our eternal salvation has suggested to him to give us these forcible lessons on the value of all earthly things.

Ever true and faithful to himself, the same on Golgotha as at Bethlehem and Nazareth, our Lord despises earthly honor, scorns riches, desires to know nothing of sensual joys. He embraces poverty, sufferings, lowliness, and makes these alike his faithful companions in life and death.

How sublime, amiable, and blessed, must be poverty, sufferings, and lowliness, when the cradle and the death-bed of the Son of God, and all that lies between both extremes, are closely and inseparably allied to them !

The wounds which the threefold concupiscence had inflicted upon mankind, were too deep for ordinary remedies to heal. An extraordinary one was required. The prejudices which prevailed among men, the overweening love of creatures, of those, especially, which flatter ambition and sensuality, were too deeply rooted. A divine testimony, proved by facts, was needed, in order to raise from our eyes the veil which hid the truth from us, to free us from that blindness which rendered our steps, here below, unsafe, and full of mortal danger.

The remedy is offered, the testimony, given.

O Cross of Christ, in which, alone, is salvation,—eloquent preacher of the truth, lift up thy trumpet-like voice, cry out without intermission, and proclaim to an infatuated world the judgment of a crucified God !

O Cross, on which eternal Love bled to death, how longingly and lovingly thou stretchest out thy blessed arms, in order to embrace all mankind, and draw all things (John 12 : 32) to him who suffered all this for our sake !

Yes, for our sake, for us, for you, young man, our Saviour chose this life of self-denial, this cruel death—and shall he have no claim upon your gratitude, no right or title to your generosity ?

He has loved you, and delivered himself for you—and

you will not love him in return, will not deliver yourself for him?

True, it is not the same kind of sacrifice that Jesus asks of every one in return; but, have you ever asked yourself seriously, what sacrifice he demands of you?

If he requires from no one a sacrifice resembling his own, he, at least, offers abundant graces for such a sacrifice as he demands of you.

O my Crucified Saviour, whose dying eye, in this important hour, is questioningly fixed upon me,—what shall I do?

Behind me is the past, which exhorts me to atonement, perhaps, to very serious atonement; a series of youthful years defiled with sin, which cry out for reparation; an empty, inactive life, which can show nothing done for eternity. Before me,—to be reached either sooner or later,—the eternal Hereafter, in which, perchance, the unspeakable misery of hell awaits me—a future which depends more or less upon the choice I make of a state of life. Above me, over-head, a dying God-Man,—dying voluntarily for me,—out of whose countless wounds the last drop is just now oozing,—my Jesus, with extended arms, my God and my All, who has loved me and delivered himself for me! O my Saviour, whose magnanimity challenges my generosity —I cry aloud to thee—: O God of light and strength! what shall I do?

133.

THE SECULAR STATE.

"*They who use this world as if they used it not ; for the figure of this world passeth away.*" (1. Cor. 7 : 31.)

The secular state is thus called, in contrast to the clerical, which is chiefly occupied with spiritual things.

The secular state is the usual vocation of men. God calls the great majority to it, that society, as such, may have stability, and the various faculties of mankind may find their legitimate employment.

Those who embrace the secular state can fulfil the commandments of God, by scrupulously performing all those requirements which their peculiar relations impose upon them, and which are in harmony with the destiny common to all,—to know God, to love him, and to serve him. The more exactly secular persons live according to these commandments, the closer they approach to that moral perfection which Jesus Christ taught by word and example.

The chief obligation of the laity consists in the punctual and persevering observance of their Christian duties towards God and the Church,—obedience to superiors, love and respect for equals, solicitude for, and condescension to, inferiors, finally, faithful performance for God's sake, of the particular duties of their state.

It is these special duties of one's state which you must

chiefly consider in your choice of a vocation ; for, with regard to the rest, all states have the same duties and obligations.

It is the province of teachers, for instance, to disseminate true science, and to educate the dear youth, the rising generation, instructing them in all knowledge, and, above all, in the fear of the Lord.

The Christian physician devotes himself to suffering humanity, with circumspection and noble self-sacrifice ; he is solicitous to benefit the souls, as well as the bodies, of his patients, by word and example. Above all things, he is careful that none of those who have entrusted themselves to him, dare to make the decisive step into eternity without being reconciled to God, and receiving the last rites of the Church.

The jurist secures to society its most valuable goods : property, honor, life. Unbiassed, above human considerations, inaccessible to bribery, just in mind, and calm in judgment, versed in law and counsel, a protector of the poor, a support of the weak, a refuge for the widow and orphan, an advocate of the oppressed and the persecuted,— he imitates the almighty Judge himself, who knows nothing of diverse weights and diverse measures (Prov. 20 : 10), who is no respecter of persons (Rom. 2 : 11), who renders to every one according to his works. (Matt. 16 : 27.)

The soldier serves his country with inviolable fidelity and devotedness ; his heart is ready for every sacrifice for the just cause ; honor and courage are his characteristics. He never abuses his arms to rudeness and violence ; they serve him not for vain show, nor does he stain them by criminal revenge, or the mad defence of his mis-called honor. In serving his earthly sovereign, he never forgets his higher duty to God, the King of kings. If he detests

cowardice,—above all, he hates and detests the caprice of blind passions.

The Christian father of a family rules with firmness and mildness. Discipline and decency, piety and diligence, concord and obedience, make his household a kingdom of God in miniature, over which he sways his gentle and protecting sceptre. He knows that he who has no care of his own, and especially of those of his own house, has denied his faith, and is worse than an infidel. (1. Tim. 5 : 8.) He knows what a heavy responsibility rests upon him, who has others under him, and that he must render an account of their souls. (Hebr. 13 : 17.) Word and example, admonition and chastisement, watchfulness and zeal, gravity and amiability, —all these are employed by him in turn, in order to guide and assist his children and dependents to their temporal and eternal destiny.

How noble this task, if viewed as allotted to men from above !

How happy the generation whose ordinary, every-day duties are thus comprehended and thus practised !

Are you, young man, called to any of these states ?

Good in themselves, useful to the human family, promoting the honor of the Most High, they are, if assigned to you by God, sanctified by religion—sure vocations in which you may attain the end of your creation.

Of course, dangers await you in all states of life. The earthly will seek to inveigle you—the wicked world will spare no pains to tear you from God ; snares will surround you on all sides ; allurements, temptations, many and various, will beset you ; inordinate love of money, ambition, sensual inclinations of the worst kind, will press you hard.

O Lord, let me find the right way ! Let me not be blinded by glittering splendor, nor allured by the syren-voice of pleasure ! Let thy voice alone decide my voca-

tion. Let me not forget that the figure of this world passes away. (1. Cor. 7 : 31.) Let me so pass through that which is temporal, that I may not lose that which is eternal. Grant, that if I choose the secular state, I may use the world as if I used it not,—that is, that I may seek first thy kingdom and justice, and make all other things subordinate and subservient to thy glory, and my own eternal welfare.

134.

ENTRANCE INTO THE WORLD.

"*Thou oughtest to be adored, O Lord.*" (Baruch 6 : 5.)

Dangerous is the passage from the retired, well-ordered life of the boy in the family-circle, or the good preparatory school, to the freer, more unguarded career of the young man at college, or out in the wide vortex of society, afar from home and parents. We may justly call this transition an entrance into the world.

Ripening years gradually assign to the youth a place among adults.

He feels tempted to rejoice that many onerous restraints are removed. He considers himself no longer in need of a guardian ; he brooks no guiding influence ; in short, he feels himself independent.

Routine is relaxed, order has given way to caprice ; hence, at this time of life, one easily falls a prey to idleness, and want of system.

If, up to this time, intercourse with the world was limited and circumscribed, the circle of acquaintances is now en-

larged. One hears more, sees more ; there are distractions from all sides,—pastimes, visits, pleasures, and enjoyments. The opportunities for disorders become more numerous, the example of others encourages, the loose maxims of the world invite, to dissipation. One must do as others do, we hear it said, youth must be enjoyed ; one must swim with the tide !

The ideas of virtue, as conveyed to the young man by a careful education, become less clear. He begins to disregard many things, and much that hitherto was sacred to him, he now looks upon as silly ; he smiles at his former piety, his conscientiousness, his narrow-mindedness, as he now terms it.

Tenderness of conscience disappears. The rudeness of certain companions is no longer offensive to him ; their aberrations no longer fill him with disgust ; the inspirations of grace, the admonitions of his interior monitor, are alike unheeded. One passion pursues another ; and in the tumult which arises, the voices from above are either imperfectly heard, or altogether drowned.

It is, no doubt, true, that these sad changes in the sentiments and actions of a young man very often take place before his entrance into the world ; but where the family and school have done their duty, and zealous pastors of souls have taken a lively interest in the boy, he still oftener remains constant in manhood to the path of rectitude. But, where the seed of corruption and malice slumbers in the youthful heart—struck, all on a sudden, by the hot ray of so-called liberty,—behold how mightily it develops, how quickly the unholy plant springs up into a tree full of branches !

Hear, then, dear young man, what faith and reason advise you, to the end that the momentous time of transition may pass you by with as little danger as possible.

Good and evil are, according to their nature, unchange-

able. What is bad in itself, is bad for the boy, for the youth, for the man.

God's justice is justice for ever (Ps. 118 : 142) ; his law is based upon eternal truth, and partakes of its immutability.

The boy, the youth, the man—all have the same end : To know God, to love him, to serve him, and thereby to be saved ; this is for them, as it is for all, the one thing necessary.

Piety is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. (1. Tim. 4 : 8.) Piety adorns the boy, the youth, and the man ; it is profitable to the boy, the youth, and the man ; it serves the boy, the youth, and the man as a blessed bridge into heaven.

If this be so, hold fast to what you have (Apoc. 3 : 11) —the good that you have learned, the virtue which you have acquired.

Fly now from evil, with as much assiduity as you did before.

Shun bad company now as you did before.

Full of diffidence, and like one who fears unknown, but imminent, dangers, go out into the world.

Remain faithful to your appointed exercises of piety ; continue to receive frequently and worthily the holy Sacraments. Why give up what has hitherto preserved your innocence, and advanced you in virtue ?

Associate with the virtuous.

If possible, have a regular confessor, and grant him a guiding influence upon your interior. His hand should be strong enough to keep a tight rein over you ; his heart mild enough to preserve yours for God.

Be industrious, and remember that you must account to God for even the smallest portion of your time.

Be prudent in the choice of your intimates.

Be on your guard, lest you pay homage to maxims entertained by the thoughtless and the impious, only uttered by scoffers and blasphemers.

Trample human respect under your feet ; such slavery degrades your free, noble youth.

Be not deceived and infatuated by the example of the multitude. Listen to what Jeremiah wrote to the captive Hebrews, and apply it to yourself : You shall see in Babylon gods of gold, and of silver, and of stone, and of wood, borne upon shoulders, causing fear to the Gentiles. Beware, therefore, that you imitate not the doings of others, and be afraid, and the fear of them shall seize upon you. But when you see the multitude behind and before, adoring them, say you in your hearts: Thou alone ought to be adored, O Lord. (Baruch 6 : 3-5.)

Yes, dear young man, you will see in the world people who practise the most insidious of all idolatry ; their idol is riches, their idol is honor, their idol is pleasure. Before these false gods, they bend their knee ; before them, they prostrate themselves in the dust.

You will see vice honored, and virtue dishonored. What, hitherto, you have considered good and estimable, you will hear reviled ; and that which you looked upon as low and despicable, you will see exalted to the skies.

Then, it will be time to say : Thou alone art to be adored, O Lord ! I shall remain faithful to the God of my fathers, to the God of my youth ; to the faithful, unchangeable, eternal Lord ; him, alone, I shall serve now, and for ever more !

135.

THE SACRED PRIESTHOOD.

"You shall be called the priests of the Lord : to you it shall be said : Ye ministers of our Lord." (Is. 61 : 6.)

Priests are the representatives of God upon earth.

They form a separate state. The Lord is their portion (Ps. 15 : 5), and their duty consists in being a chosen generation to the Most High (1. Pet. 2 : 9), and in helping men to reach their eternal destiny.

The vocation of priests is to heal, to pray, and to offer sacrifice.

They cleanse men from the stains of the soul ; they educate them for heaven ; they fulfil, in regard to the erring, the duties of the Good Shepherd ; they pour oil and wine into the wounds of the soul ; they give refreshment to weary mortals ; they assuage suffering, and impart strength.

They praise God in their own name and in that of all the faithful ; they make supplications, they give thanks, they petition for new graces and blessings.

They celebrate the most sublime mystery of the New Law, and daily offer up to the Eternal Father the immaculate Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world, in expiation of their own sins, and those of mankind, and for the obtaining of innumerable graces and blessings.

They are God's coadjutors (1. Cor. 3 : 9) ; they are the ambassadors of Christ (2. Cor. 5 : 20) ; they are the dispensers of the mysteries of Christ. (1. Cor. 4 : 1.)

They are the instruments of which God makes use for the salvation of mankind. They imitate God, the Creator, assist God, the Redeemer nd prepare men's hearts for God, the Sanctifier.

They are saviours of souls.

To save souls! O sublime work! O work most acceptable and glorious to God! God's own work!

I seek my brethren (Gen. 37 : 16), says the priest, and this is what drives him forward on his beautiful mission, far and near. He looks here and there; he seeks after the lost sheep, bringing it back, when found, to the true shepherd and guardian of our souls. (1. Pet. 2 : 25.)

I seek my brethren,—and he goes after sinners—warns, implores, threatens, wrestles, and conquers.

I seek my brethren,—and he combats error, disperses ignorance, softens obduracy, and overcomes malice.

I seek my brethren,—and he hastens away to foreign countries, far beyond the seas, and makes his abode with those who sit in the darkness and in the shadow of death. (Ps. 106 : 10.) Through his exertions, the glad tidings gain ground; the day breaks, the sun of the Gospel becomes brighter and brighter; whole nations walk in God's light (Is. 60 : 3), and know God, and Jesus Christ, his Son, whom he hath sent. (John 17 : 3.)

I seek my brethren,—and hand and heart are raised to heaven, and fervently the words are uttered : Souls, O God, souls,—the rest take to thyself. (Gen. 14 : 21.)

O heart of the priest, large as the universe, high as the heavens, restless as fire, glowing with the love of the Apostles, thirsting like the Saviour's heart,—who can conceive thy longing desires, hopes, sufferings, joys, struggles, and triumphs!

By reason of his vocation, the priest is obliged to a much higher degree of perfection than the rest of the faithful.

As he excels the latter in dignity, so it is becoming that he should by far excel them in nobility of soul and in sanctity of life.

He is the salt of the earth. Woe to the salt, if it lose its savor (Matt. 5 : 13), for then it is unfit for seasoning.

He is a light. Woe to the light that proves to be an ignis fatuus ! Woe to the light that is extinguished, or hidden under a bushel !

He is the city of God, set upon a mountain. (Matt. 5 : 14.) Woe to the mountain that is so surrounded by mists and vapors, that the city on its top is lost to the sight of the expectant pilgrim !

If souls are committed to the priest's charge, and if he is to lead them to heaven, he must surely walk himself in the way of salvation.

If he is to educate mankind in spirituality, he must certainly labor unceasingly at his own spiritual perfection.

How dare the curse of sin adhere to the hands that have been made especially to bless ?

Shall the mouth which is to announce the words of life, be the mouth of one spiritually dead ?

Shall the priest's actions contradict the word of edification, and pull down instead of building up ?

Celibacy and chastity. As the priest communes more than ordinary men with God, the most pure Spirit, so the carnal portion of his nature should preponderate less in him than in other men.

Separation from the world—not simply by apparel, or solely in outward appearance, but in thought and deed, by gravity and recollection, by indifference to everything that is not God, or does not lead to God, by reserve and prudence towards a world that is seated in wickedness (1. John 5 : 19), in which there is naught save the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride

of life (1. John 2 : 16), out of which, constantly blows a poisonous wind, fatal, above all, to lax, unguarded hearts.

Piety, fervor of prayer, interior life. The Lord is the portion of my inheritance ; to him my heart and my understanding are directed ; he is always in my sight (Ps. 15 : 8), and I am always conscious of his presence. His service occupies me above all ; his honor is nearest to my heart.

Activity in my own especial sphere, indefatigable fulfilment of the duties of the priestly office. Energy and will to employ every moment usefully, always aspiring to qualify myself more and more for my sublime vocation.

Zeal for souls—prudent zeal, yet, nevertheless, restless, fiery zeal, capable of being hindered by no obstacle. God will strictly require from the hands of the priest, the souls which he commits to his care. He will require their blood at his hands. (Ezech. 3 : 18.)

Although great the dignity, how heavy the burden of the priesthood !

But most abundantly, however, flow the heavenly blessings upon the priest.

They descend upon him, in the Sacrament of Holy Orders, in sevenfold radiance. And having reached the highest step of the altar, the eternal High-Priest there awaits him, clothes him with inexpressible dignity, places him at his side, feeds him daily with his own Flesh and Blood, and longs to share with him his priestly heart— that heart so full of purity and mildness, so full of generosity and self-sacrifice !

The holy Church, on her part, instructs him through the mouth of enlightened prelates, fortifies him by wise ordinances ; her careful hand guides the priest with an especial love and circumspection, whilst her maternal eye ever rests vigilantly upon him.

The breviary, that holy and sublime prayer of duty, which

continually reminds him of his position of mediator, is a very salutary barrier against the rush of every-day life, which threatens to secularize him. It calls the priest aside from the turmoil of the world to the praise of God ; it fills him with holy thoughts ; it lays open the word of God before his eyes, and presents to him a long array of Christian heroes ; it initiates him deeper and deeper in the mysteries of the work of Redemption, and in the knowledge which holy and enlightened men had of it.

And then, the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the holy Communion, the daily intercourse and closest union with the Author of all life and grace ! A multitude of hallowed customs, blessings, administrations of the Sacraments,—all serve to invite him to recollection and prayer, to a realization of his own grand powers, and of the sublimity of his heavenly vocation.

You shall be called the priests of the Lord : to you it shall be said : Ye ministers of our Lord God, you shall eat the riches of the gentiles, and you shall pride yourselves in their glory. (Is. 61 : 6.)

And I am called to such a dignity, if thou, O my divine Master, wilt but make me worthy of thy call !—I will rejoice in the Lord, and my soul shall be joyful in my God : for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation : and with the robe of justice he hath covered me, as a bridegroom decked with a crown, and a bride adorned with her jewels. (Is. 61 : 10.)

136.

THE CALL TO THE PRIESTHOOD.

"*Neither doth any man take the honor to himself but he that is called by God, as Aaron was.*" (Hebr. 5 : 4.)

The priesthood is so sublime a state, that no one should embrace it without a clearly-known vocation to it.

No, no man takes this honor to himself but he that is called by God, as Aaron was. (Hebr. 5 : 4.)

A negative inclination for this holy state would certainly not be sufficient. You feel no disinclination to it ; it does not appear impossible to you to fulfil its chief duties,—celibacy especially ; you imagine yourself free from certain violent temptations ; you are not destitute of the necessary talents. Is that all that is required for a vocation to the priesthood ?

Much less might that be considered a call to it, which rests purely upon exterior reasons or worldly motives.

It is much to be desired that you become a priest. Pious desire ! if the honor of God is its sole object. But all such wishes must subordinate to his holy will and pleasure, and must be manifested in such a manner as not to do violence to your free choice.

It is desired—and by whom ? In matters of vocation, the wishes of relatives must not anticipate those of God. He is the Supreme Ruler of all his creatures ; to each, he assigns his place—to each, he gives the graces necessary to

the proper discharge of its duties. Parents and relatives are at liberty to express their wishes, but it must not be done in an imperious, or, as it were, a compulsory manner.

O inconsiderately pious parents! O selfish or vain parents! why are you so foolish, so cruel, as to set your own interests above those of God and of your children?

True, the child should listen to the voice of good, reasonable parents, consult with them, and be advised by them: but God himself must decide the vocation by the interior call of grace.

But how is it, if young men seek their temporal advantage even in this holiest of states?

You wish to be well and quickly provided for? O degradation of all that is high and holy! Was the Church established for this purpose? Is the sanctuary a place of refuge for such who are fit for nothing else, or too lazy to earn their bread otherwise?

You count upon a life of ease? You are mistaken; the priesthood is a state of suffering. Labor within, labor without: the work of self-sanctification, the unintermitting work of trying to save souls, study, preaching, hearing confessions, the instruction of youth, the visitation of the sick, and a variety of other sacerdotal duties.

Live at your ease? Woe unto thee, if thou preachest not the gospel! (1. Cor. 9: 16.) But the Gospel is preached both by example and word: by an example that rests upon truth, and (after careful preparation) by the cogent preaching of the word of God, which, thanks to his grace, is abundantly fructified in the souls of the listeners.

You count upon a life of ease? O hireling! To feed the sheep, to go after the lost ones, to carry the wearied, to sustain the weak, to keep off the wolves, to wrestle with them, and, if necessary, to rescue from them their prey,—will all this cost you no labor? Yes, rest, slumber, feed yourself,

and not your flock (Ezech. 34 : 8) ; be idle, and become traitor to the sheep and lambs so dearly bought by the blood of Jesus,—but, O terrible responsibility ! O the judgment of God ! O eternity !

You ask for the marks of a true vocation to the holy priesthood ?

First, pay attention to the preliminary conditions :—

Do you possess the necessary talents ? Erroneously, or rather, almost blasphemously, it is asserted, sometimes, that anything is good enough for God. Hear what he himself says on this point : The lips of the priest shall keep knowledge, and they shall seek the law at his mouth, because he is an angel of the Lord of hosts. (Malach. 2 : 7.) And do you suppose that the priestly eloquence, by means of which, the Holy Ghost speaks to the faithful, can exist without a solid, scientific foundation ?

Is your life spotless ? A youth spent in purity is, of course, the best recommendation ; yet, on the other hand, penitents are not excluded from the priesthood — penitents, that is, such as have expiated and are still expiating the transgressions whereby they once criminally desecrated their youth ; penitents, who, after having long since, and most energetically, renounced their evil habits, prepare themselves by a pure present for a still purer future, and leave no means untried to grow and advance in virtue and holiness.

As regards the marks themselves, there are very many ; the greater the number you possess, the more certain your call.

Is your intention a perfectly pure one ? Do you seek in the priesthood God, your own, and your neighbor's salvation, and nothing temporal—such as honor, prosperity, ease, comfort ? Is it God, above all, that urges you to embrace this state ? Have you heard this call repeatedly ?

Do you perceive an interior urging to this holy state ?

Does the thought of your future priesthood calm and refresh you?

Is the honor of God really dear to your heart? Have you a lively desire to save souls?

Do you find pleasure in spiritual things? Do you love prayer, the Sacraments, spiritual reading, intercourse with pious and spiritual persons?

If you are truly called to the priestly state, that is, to a life of sacrifice, how is it you are not able to make a sacrifice of evil in yourself, to give up a favorite sin, to overcome a favorite inclination?

Prove yourself,—aye, prove yourself very seriously. From almost all other states one may recede; but here, there is no return; once bound, you are bound for ever. Thou art a priest for ever, according to the order of Melchisedech.

Blessed you, if you are called to re-enforce the sacred phalanx which gives to the Church militant, her heroic champions and leaders in the battle!

Once more: the call must come from above. This is the only legitimate gate to the fold of Jesus Christ, of which it is said: He that entereth not by the door, into the sheepfold, is a thief and a robber. (John 10: 1.)

Yes, young man, God must call you. Woe to him who intrudes uncalled into that holiest of states, in which the sacrilegious intruder not only does no good, but effects, alas! an infinite injury to himself and others!

O terrible utterance of the Eternal Truth: Every plant which is not planted by God, shall be rooted up (Matt. 15: 13), since it brings forth no fruit; it is useless in itself and to others; it is fit only to be cast into the fire and to be burned!

137.

THE EVANGELICAL COUNSELS.

"If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell what thou hast,—and come, follow me." (Matt. 19 : 21.)

From the fact that we are commanded to love God with our whole heart, and with our whole soul, and with all our strength (Luke 10 : 27), it is clear that we are all destined for perfection.

There are, however, two kinds of perfection : An essential or indispensable perfection, and an extraordinary or higher perfection, which, alone, is commonly designated as Perfection.

A merely essential perfection excludes mortal sin, which is opposed to the love of God, and separates us from him.

An extraordinary perfection aims higher. It detaches us from everything that might be prejudicial to union with God ; it keeps itself free from an inordinate love of the world and of self ; it loves God above all things, and whatever it loves besides him, it simply and principally loves for his sake and with reference to him ; in short, it subordinates all to the love of God ; and there is no sacrifice which it is not ready to make for his sake.

The means to this perfection are different from perfection itself. They are chiefly three, and these our Lord Jesus Christ, by word and example, proposes for our choice. They are in direct contrast to the threefold concupis-

cence of nature,—to the concupiscence of the eyes, or avarice, to the concupiscence of the flesh, or lust, and to the pride of life, or the rebellion of the haughty mind against all authority and restraint. These means are called : Voluntary poverty, perpetual chastity, and perfect obedience.

The goods of this life are threefold : Extrinsic goods, goods of the body, and goods of the soul.

An inordinate desire for, or attachment to, these goods, is forbidden by the commandments. He who would place in them his ultimate end and entire aim, would infallibly lose the heavenly, eternal goods. One may, however, make use of these goods, and yet be saved ; the entire renunciation of them is by no means a duty for all.

There is no doubt that it is easier for a man to obtain his last end and aim by an entire renunciation thereof, just as the swimmer is swifter, and surer of reaching the opposite bank of a stream, if he enters the water entirely unencumbered by clothing.

Hence, our Saviour in the Gospel counsels us to renounce all things. He does not command this renunciation ; he only counsels it. His Gospel is the law of liberty, under which we are regarded as friends, as children, of God ; it has in view not merely our salvation in general, but our highest welfare. Thus, also, an opportunity is offered to us for acquiring greater merits—a sphere is presented for the display of greater generosity—than that of the average Christian. If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and come, follow me. (Matt. 19 : 21.) If thou wilt. . . .

Here is a state of life which embraces all those who sincerely seek to put into practice the above-mentioned means, in order to secure and perfect their salvation. Such persons bind themselves to God and their superior by vows,—that

is, they solemnly promise to fulfil the Evangelical Counsels.

In this state of perfection, the Religious state, one permanently obliges himself to voluntary poverty, perpetual chastity, and perfect obedience in the proper manner, approved of by the Church.

By virtue of his vow of Poverty, the Religious renounces all independent rights to property, and every use thereof that might resemble the exercise of an independent right.

Evangelical Chastity not only rejects, by an express promise, every forbidden impure lust, but also, the holy Sacrament of Matrimony, that the soul may be espoused to the Lord alone, and serve the Lord with a less divided heart. It aspires already here to that which is granted only to the heavenly spirits : They shall be as the angels of God in heaven. (Matt. 22 : 30.)

Perfect Obedience surrenders itself, even in those things which the divine law permits to human liberty, to the will and pleasure of its lawful superiors, in whom it recognises the representative of God. To make a sacrifice of the will, by which we dispose of all other goods, is surely the sacrifice of sacrifices. Yes, obedience is better than sacrifice., (1. Kings 15 : 22.)

How sublime this state of perfection is, he only can comprehend who examines more closely the difference between commandment and counsel, and considers the degree of love which must furnish the motive power for the fulfilment of the one and the other.

Ponder upon, and measure, this difference. One man desires not to be the enemy of God, and therefore, avoids mortal sin ; but he does not correspond to the wishes, counsels, and invitations of God, just because they are only counsels, which, if not obeyed, do not exclude from eternal happiness. For the other, the least indication of the divine will suffices : hence, he cheerfully and joy-

fully renounces all that he has, and all that he expects to have. And he never retracts his renunciation. He binds himself to it by a solemn oath, and makes it a real sacrifice. Do you distinguish, now, the different degrees of love?

Which life most resembles the life of Christ,—that according to the commandments, or this according to the counsels? Christ cared nothing for riches, honors, and pleasures, on the contrary, he chose poverty, the cross, ignominy, humble obedience.

The sin of Adam opened in every one of his descendants (except the Blessed Virgin), the comfortless abyss of a threefold concupiscence; and how can that abyss be filled, if not by the sacrifice of those very goods, whose abuse has become the occasion of our unhappy separation from God? But as man cleaves to earthly goods with all the intensity of his carnal heart, the voluntary renunciation thereof, is, indeed, the sacrifice of sacrifices. To give one's self entirely to God in order to be able to serve him more undividedly, to renounce every attachment to earthly things—what greatness of soul!

You stand astounded before this sublime height of Christian renunciation!

Yes, it is sublime—yet not, thank God! unattainable; the divine call thereto should be regarded by you as the greatest grace.

Does not every one who chooses a state of life, intend to become happy in it and through it? How, then, can a state of sacrifice, of renunciation, such as that of the Evangelical Counsels, make any one happy? This life of so great and sustained moral efforts,—what is it?

Hear, and be astonished!

Behold a Religious, who leaves father, mother, brother, sister, friends, money, honors, pleasures, liberty—in a word,

who leaves the world, in order to serve God alone, and to serve him in a perfect manner. Such a one enters upon a thorny path, and chooses the cross for his portion in a much wider sense than ordinary Christians are bound to do ; and yet, (O apparent contradiction !) it is just in this, that he finds the extraordinary happiness which this chosen state affords.

The religious state bears all the marks of salvation.

The religious state is a state of the most sublime perfection.

The religious state is a state of election, of merit, of a special claim to the choicest rewards in the kingdom of glory.

And such a state is, consequently, the happiest of all states, since it leads to the highest, eternal happiness ; it confers happiness, here below, through a confidence in the never-ending bliss of heaven, hereafter.

Herein, lies the hundredfold, solemnly promised by the divine Author of the Evangelical Counsels to his chosen ones, even in this life (Matt. 19 : 29) ; for their consciousness of security, their assurance of eternal salvation, yea, even the discord which reigns between them and a wicked, perverse world, pours over their hearts a peace which surpasses all understanding (Phil. 4 : 7), a peace which the world cannot give (John 14 : 27), because it does not even surmise it. The thought of having sacrificed everything for God, of having made him their richest and most liberal Creditor, in a certain measure, their loving debtor, fills their souls with the purest and most abundant consolations —consolations which even the rudest trials and changes of life fail to embitter.

It may appear incomprehensible to the world how any one can find and enjoy peace in the midst of warfare, sacrifices, and privations.

And yet, once more we repeat, that it is peace, inexpressible peace ! No idle peace, no effeminate, lazy peace, based upon the granting of every desire, upon the constant yielding to corrupt nature, or upon an oft-repeated effort to gratify its insatiable cravings ;—a peace, rather, founded upon a holy self-hatred, upon sacrifice, and mortification of one's sensual inclinations, self-love, and self-will—It is a peace in poverty, in humility, in retirement, in patience, in the faithful performance of the most difficult duties of one's state of life.

Marvelous contrast ! The worldling possesses whatever his heart desires : he is rich and in honor ; he enjoys himself, feasts sumptuously, denies himself nothing ; and yet, he is not contented : he complains, he craves for more, he lives in fear, he worries, consumes himself, looks gloomily into the past and future ; whilst the man of sacrifice is cheerful, calm, in perfect harmony with God and himself. Consoled with regard to the past, he laments his errors and expiates ; full of confidence with regard to the future, which beckons him radiantly to the fair Land beyond the grave, —fearing nothing, hoping nothing, except what is eternal, —he lives a life of happy days, and would exchange his lot with none, yea, not even with the most favored of this world.

This contrast is instructive for you, young man, even though so high a call should never be yours.

The world makes promises, but does not keep them. It unceasingly speaks of happiness, and gives only misery —open, public misery, or secret, gnawing misery. It speaks incessantly of peace (Jer. 6: 14), and behold there is no peace but unrest, confusion. (Jer. 30 : 8.)

The religious holds fast to the promise of his Lord and Master. It is impossible for God to lie. (Hebr. 6 : 18.) And he says : Come to me, all ye that labor and are

heavy laden, and I will refresh you. (Matt. 11 : 28.) Take up my yoke upon you ; . . . my yoke is sweet and my burden is light. (Matt. 11 : 29, 30.) Learn of me to be meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest to your souls. More, still : Amen, I say to you, that every one that hath left house, or brethren, or sister, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall possess life everlasting. (Matt. 19 : 29.)

FOURTH BOOK.

CONSUMMATION.

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138.

HOLY YOUTH.

" *Venerable old age is not that of a long time, nor counted by the number of years ; but a spotless life is old age.*"
(Wisd. 4 : 8, 9.)

Why should not a young man be capable of solid virtue, even of high perfection ? Is this the prerogative only of age ? Do years, alone, give wisdom and experience ? By no means. There may be young men who carry ripe sense in a youthful breast, who, being made perfect in a short space, have fulfilled a long time. (Wisd. 4 : 13.)

Venerable old age is not that of long time, nor counted by the number of years ; but the understanding of a man is grey hairs : and a spotless life is old age. (Wisd. 4 : 7-9.)

Inspiring thought !—Though I am yet so young, I can be a saint ; I can acquire, and possess, true wisdom !

This is in my power. Does anything prevent me on the part of God ? Certainly not. It is his desire and will that I should be holy both in youth and age. When Christ says : Be ye perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect (Matt. 5 : 48), his language is general ; it embraces every age, every sex, and every state. And when the Apostle says : This is the will of God, your sanctification, these words in no wise confine holiness to a certain age.

I can be a saint. The grace of God is at my disposal as well as at that of the oldest and wisest. I can pray for it,

and God will not refuse his good Spirit to me, if I sincerely ask it. (Luke 11 : 13. I can find support in him, who says of himself : Without me you can do nothing (John 15 : 5) ; but through my grace of assistance, you can do all things. (Phil. 4 : 13.)

Difficulties there are ;—the frivolity and thoughtlessness of youth, the tumult of raging passions, inexperience, and weakness. But surely, these difficulties are not insurmountable.

Even though the understanding of a youth be less developed than that of a man of mature age, through the grace of God he is sufficiently capable of learning the science of the Saints. It is not years, natural intelligence, or worldly experience, that give an insight into the mysteries of holiness, but attention to the voice of God, meditation on divine things, and the good example of others.

A spotless life is the best key to the deepest secrets of holiness. The pure heart is the most fitting mirror to reflect the bright rays of the divine sanctity.

Many things are in favor of the young.

Prejudice and false principles are not so deeply rooted. Worldly views and maxims have not yet obscured the light of grace and reason.

The heart is more open to impressions ; it is fresher, warmer, and more easily roused to enthusiasm for a great and good work.

The young man calculates less ; therefore, he is the more enterprising.

I can accomplish this work, great and arduous as it seems. O yes, my God ! I plainly hear a voice within me say : You can be holy ! My reason tells me the same ; the example of the Saints loudly proclaims it; Eternal Truth boldly declares it. I can be holy ; there is no real obstacle ; I am even obliged to be holy.

And yet—? What prevents me from becoming a saint, and advancing in moral perfection ?

Alas ! myself, and my own cowardice, my own abhorrence of everything that is called sacrifice.

I hesitate to employ the proper means.

I shrink from every effort, I am afraid of warfare. I cannot resolve to resist my corrupt nature, to declare war against it, to conquer and reduce it to submission.

But the seed must first die, before it can multiply. If it does not die, it will remain alone ; it will not spring up and bear a hundredfold. I am afraid of this death of mortification : and yet, this death is life, resurrection, immortality.

139.

HOLINESS.

" *You shall be holy, because I am holy.*" (Levit. 11 : 46.)

What else is human holiness but a thorough harmony of thought, word and action with those of the Infinite Holiness ?

Young man, you imagine, perhaps, that sanctity is something far above you ; that it means only heroic acts, miracles, extraordinary, superhuman deeds.

You are mistaken. Holiness does not consist in the imitation of those attributes of God which concern his essential majesty, might, or wisdom. It is the imitation, as far as human frailty permits, of the sinlessness of God.

Hence, it is not written : Be you almighty as your

heavenly Father is almighty, or the like, but : Be holy, because I am holy. (Levit. 11 : 46.)

God is holy, because he detests sin and loves and wills what is good.

God is holy, because he does not, and cannot, depart from the eternal law of holiness, which he himself is.

God is holy, because he is all-pure, and no shadow of a fault can be found in him.

God is holy, because whatever is morally good and perfect, is found in him.

God is holy by virtue of his nature.

God is Essential Holiness.

God is holy without measure or limit ; he is infinitely holy.

In God, holiness is something complete and perfect, incapable of increase or decrease.

God's holiness is inscrutable ; he is the plenitude, the source, the measure, the model, and the end of all holiness.

The rational creature is holy in so far as he detests sin, and loves and practises virtue.

A creature is holy, if, in unwavering fidelity, he adheres to the eternal law, which is God himself.

A creature is holy, if, in every possible manner, he aspires to perfection.

A creature, however, can be holy only through God.

In the creature, holiness is something accessory, acquired.

The holiness of the creature is limited, circumscribed, finite ; he never loves God as he deserves to be loved ; he is never so united with God as to be changed into the essence of God.

The holiness of the creature is mutable, capable of being lessened or increased.

The holiness of the creature is, and must be, a faint shad-

ow of the infinite holiness of the Creator, and is nothing in comparison with it.

Now, you perceive also how God could say to man, and was even obliged to say to him : You shall be holy, because I am holy. (Levit. 11 : 46.)

Because I am holy, you must be holy. For this, I have created you. By creating you for myself that you might be worthy to enjoy the eternal Vision of the Godhead, it was requisite for me to will, that you should be holy : For there shall not enter into heaven anything defiled. (Apoc. 21 : 27.)

Because I am holy, you must be holy,—approximately, according to your ability, your state of life, and the measure of grace given to you.

O God of sanctity ! I understand that I can never attain to union with thee, in the life to come, if I am not holy, here below. Good and evil cannot unite. Thou art all-pure, all-holy ; therefore, I must be also pure and holy.

What, then, have I to do, here on earth ? I must be purified more and more.

I must labor to destroy within me all that is unholy or imperfect—strive to grow more and more like to God. Virtue must gradually become a second nature to me ; I must learn to do good with pleasure and facility.

But O, the weakness and frailty of my nature ! Let me not, however, give way to despondency. I am not commanded to acquire holiness by my own unaided efforts ; I must, and can, arrive thereat only through the grace of God. Sanctify me, O Lord ! and make me according to thy own Heart, that I may be worthy to dwell with thee for ever.

Young man, you imagine it to be extremely difficult to imitate God's holiness, because it has never been presented visibly before your eyes ?

Is this true ? Has no man seen it ? Has the holiness of God never really been made manifest ? What does faith teach ? Have you not heard, have you not seen with your eyes, and handled with your hands, the word of life, which was from the beginning ? (1. John 1 : 1.)

Has not God's sanctity, so to say, been incorporated in Jesus Christ, his only-begotten Son ? It would have been difficult for us to transfer the divine holiness, and apply our conception thereof to the circumstances of human life. The Son of God came to our assistance. He was made man—he dwelt among us—he lived like other men ; his example, his doctrine disclosed the whole depth and height of the holiness of God. Jesus says : The things I have heard from the Father, the same I speak in the world. (John 8 : 26.) I work the works of him that sent me. (John 9 : 4.)

Young man, enter into the spirit of Jesus ; and holiness shall no longer be an enigma to you. Follow the doctrine and example of Jesus, and I assure you, that you shall be holy and perfect. (Matt. 5 : 48.)

O my God ! it is my destiny to enter yonder blissful heaven, and join in the unceasing canticle of praise, which is sung before thy throne : Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts. (Apoc. 4 : 8.) Should I not, therefore, endeavor to become holy myself, in order hereafter, to be worthy to praise and glorify thy holiness with all the Angels and Saints ?

140.

ASPIRATIONS FOR HOLINESS.

"*Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice.*"
(Matt. 5 : 6.)

The first and chief condition of holiness is to have a great desire and earnest will to become holy.

Since holiness is not innate in us, since it is not given to us by God without our co-operation, and since it does not come to us of itself, we must strive for it ; that is, we must endeavor to overcome every obstacle, put our hand to the plow, and employ the necessary means for obtaining it.

This striving proceeds primarily from a lively conviction that our co-operation with the divine aid is absolutely necessary. It depends, then, upon a true appreciation of what is called holiness.

It is grounded not only upon the necessity of being solicitous for the welfare of our soul, but of being solicitous for it to the utmost of our ability.

It is rooted in a well-founded fear that it is but too easy to miss our aim.

With this conviction, is associated the sincere wish to become as like to God as possible, and the resolution to make use of whatever, according to the purposes of God, can complete our transformation into himself. My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready. (Ps. 107 : 2.) What wilt thou have me to do ? (Acts 9 : 6.) Speak, Lord, for

thy servant heareth. (1. Kings 3 : 9.) O holy sentiments! dispositions most pleasing to God! The soul desires to become perfect, as God himself is perfect (Matt. 5 : 48); but since God is infinitely perfect, she gives herself no rest, being well aware, that the goal is still far off, however diligently and constantly she may labor for it.

Behold, this is the thirst, the hunger, after justice, of which it is said: Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall be filled (Matt. 5 : 6);— filled, indeed, though not completely satiated until hereafter, in that kingdom where no hunger or thirst or want of any kind exists!—filled also in this world, through the consciousness of having done the will of God, and the foretaste of an assured and over-abundant recompense.

You have renounced mortal sin,—sin in general, but are you also aspiring to Christian perfection?

Are you burning with the desire of growing according to the Spirit of God,— to take deeper and deeper root in the virtues proper to you, and to mount higher and higher on the ladder of perfection?

O miserable short-sightedness! We imagine we have labored sufficiently, when sin is removed, and we have acquired such virtues as enable us to escape punishment.

Alas! in this mean-spirited niggardliness our best powers are consumed, and the Heart of God is wounded, displeased. He continually reproaches us with our want of generosity, while conscience condemns our cowardice and half-heartedness in his service. Not without reason, do fears sometimes arise in our ungenerous hearts, regarding the security of our salvation. When we are so grudging with God, we cannot expect him to be very liberal with us; our meanness closes the divine hand ever open to bestow upon his creatures the graces which they need, and, still more, those extraordinary helps which their circumstances may require.

Enkindle, then, in your heart, young man, a very ardent desire to become more like to God. Do not rank yourself among those wretched ones who always ask: Must I do this? Am I obliged to do that? Shall I lose heaven if I do not do it? Mercenary souls! Narrow hearts!

You know not to what a height of grace, to what degree of holiness, God would elevate you, if you would give yourself to him without reserve. See that you do not offer an insult to him, by prescribing limits to his holy purposes—by lingering and hesitating when he beckons you onward.

Heaven holds not the same measure of happiness and glory for all; the souls of the Blessed differ, as star differs from star in glory. (1. Cor. 15: 41.)

Great are our diligence and assiduity with regard to temporal things. We embrace all labors, and exert ourselves to the utmost to acquire competence or wealth. We endeavor to ameliorate our condition, to become richer in knowledge. How numerous are the inventions and discoveries made in natural science! Progress is the watch-word and motto of the age.

Why not put forward these efforts in a cause infinitely more worthy of them? Why not strive to make progress where it is alone truly valuable?

O young man, aim high, very high, if you would not have the arrow of your desire dragged violently down to earth by its gross weight.

141.

DIVINE INSPIRATIONS.

"*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock.*" (Apoc. 3 : 20.)

How often do I stand at the door of your heart, young man, knocking for admittance! I, your Saviour, I, your well-meaning Counsellor, your most disinterested Friend, your Father full of affection and solicitude!

Will you not open to me?

Will you not open to me quickly?

Often I am forced to wait long before receiving any response; often, entirely unheeded, I turn sadly away.

Know, that you will never be holy, if you do not attend to my voice, if you do not faithfully co-operate with my grace.

I make known to you my will; you know what you have to avoid, what to do, in order to be saved. From my example, you can learn to act in the most perfect way, and merit the complacency of my heavenly Father in the fullest measure.

I teach you profitable things. (Is. 48 : 17.) I conduct you in the way wherein it is expedient for you to walk.

I am the light, which enlightens every man that comes into the world. (John 1 : 9.) I intend to enlighten your spirit. In this light, you see the path of duty, the moral greatness to which you are called, and how you can attain it.

I send fire from heaven, and what will I but that it be enkindled in your heart? (John 14 : 23.)

It is your duty to open your eyes to the light, and be ever guided by its rays.

It is your duty to keep alive the holy spark within you, and never again to permit its fire to be extinguished.

How blind are you to mistake your own interest, if you do not open your heart to my inspirations, if you do not conscientiously follow them! How much may depend upon one single inspiration!

How irreverently do you act, if you do not hear my words, if you quickly forget them, or even despise them!

Yes, I stand at your door and knock, and if it remain closed to me, I pass by and offer my blessings to wiser and more grateful souls.

For the future, listen more attentively to my voice, and be more docile. Keep more aloof from the world, that its turmoil may not hinder you from hearing my call, that its evil example may not teach you to despise it.

O, shut me out no longer from your heart! Admit me, and suffer me to remain there; I am its only joy, peace, and salvation.

If any one love me, he will keep my word; and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make an abode with him. (John 14: 23.)

142.

INSTRUCTION AND GUIDANCE

"*Be continually with a holy man.*" (Ecclus. 37: 15.)

There are many wrong roads—there are many circuitous ways! How important it is to be rightly guided!

A good guide leads us more securely, more quickly, and more meritoriously to our end.

Even the path of holiness has its dark and dangerous places, its rough, steep ascents, its fatal precipices. Shall we then walk it without a guide ?

Woe to him that is alone ; for when he falleth, he hath none to lift him up. (Eccles. 4 : 10.)

He that trusteth in his own heart, is a fool. (Prov 28 : 26.) Be continually with a holy man, whomsoever thou shalt know to observe the fear of God ; whose soul is according to thy own soul ; and who, when thou shalt stumble in the dark, will be sorry for thee. (Ecclus. 37 : 15, 16.)

This man is your confessor, your spiritual director.

True, it is immaterial from whom you receive absolution, provided it be from a duly-authorized priest of God. Yet it is by no means immaterial who is your spiritual director.

The priest in God's place is not only judge, but also physician, and you understand very well, how much one physician can differ from another.

The guidance of souls goes farther than the mere administration of the Sacrament.

There are many things, the knowledge of which is very essential to a soul eagerly solicitous for her salvation. She needs to know the manner of successfully combating temptation, the mode of intimate converse with God, the manifold forms of prayer, the practice of certain good works, the most perfect way of fulfilling the duties of one's state of life, the acquirement and perfection of individual virtues.

Young man, are you already so enlightened in all these matters, that of yourself you can always find the shortest, best, and most secure path ?

O, let us not trust to ourselves in spiritual matters, any more than in temporal.

It would be both sad and absurd for a blind man to presume to lead his blind brother. No less sad and absurd is it

for a blind man to act as his own guide on uneven, intricate, and unknown paths.

Men generally place much confidence in a true friend, and lay great weight on his words. More valuable than a mere friend, a companion at table (Ecclus. 6 : 10), is that friend who is solicitous only for the welfare of your soul, and who possesses the skill and experience to promote it.

Men engage counsellors in their worldly affairs ; they deliberate with them often and minutely on business projects ; their knowledge is utilized, their opinions and advice attentively hearkened to. Is it not also both necessary and judicious to make the affair of our interior life the subject of prudent deliberation ?

Men have teachers to instruct them in science and art, and for many years give themselves up completely to their direction, receiving all their instructions as oracles.

And yet, the path of earthly science is not so difficult and intricate as that of the science of salvation !

The mistakes and errors possible in temporal matters are far less serious in their consequences, than those to which the soul is exposed in the affairs of Eternity !

The question, on the one hand, merely concerns earthly wisdom, temporal gain, the cultivation of the understanding, a position in human society—on the other, the science of salvation, the soul, God, and eternity are all involved.

Dear young man, how thankful you should be to divine Providence, if it gives you a tried master for your interior life !

Behold, your knowledge and will are yet very deficient, and this deficiency will be supplied by an enlightened guide.

Where is your experience ? Do you know the world sufficiently ? Will it not deceive and ensnare you? Do you clearly perceive all the wiles and delusions of the Evil One ? Do not over-estimate your own strength.

Alas ! there are a thousand things to be learned about the allurements of the passions, the delusions of self-love, the nature, development, and inner connection of the different virtues ! Do you not sometimes need the spur, sometimes the bridle, and again, the support and protection of a strong arm ? Will you fight the hot battles of youth alone ? Do you not know that a brother that is helped by his brother, is like a strong city ? (Prov. 18 : 19.)

In a more accurate knowledge of the world and of self ; in that deeper insight into the nature of virtues ; in that distinction, often so difficult to discern, of that which is good from that which is better ; in that circumspection in the choice of the means,—in all these things, how much do you not stand in need of an eye that sees with and for you, of a hand that is active with and for you ! How valuable to you would be another's prudence and experience ! How many dangers you would escape by means of such guidance ! How many round-about ways would you not avoid !

It is madness and presumption to expect to arrive at the science of the Saints, the most serious, the most important, of all sciences, by the immediate operation of the Holy Ghost. This would be a miracle, only vouchsafed to some few of the Saints, because of exceptional circumstances.

The ordinary course of divine Providence is to lead men by their fellow-creatures ; and truly, never will guidance be wanting to him who desires to be led, and who is ready to follow, like a little child, his heaven-appointed guide.

By the aid of faithful directors, skilled in the spiritual life, the Saints became what they were, attained the height of sanctity, and the heavenly bliss and glorv which they now enjoy.

Ah ! truly precious is that guide to eternal life, to whom the heart can intrust itself, to whom it can confidingly dis-

close its most secret folds, and from whom flow counsel, instruction, consolation, or warning, according to the needs of the moment. Desolate and forlorn are you, if you lack such a friend!

You ask, where shall I find this guide and friend?

The man, who in the desired way can be of use to you, ought, above all, to be a man of God.

He ought to be experienced in the ways of the Lord, in the interior life.

He ought to know youth in its life and aspirations, in its goodness and perversity, in its inclinations both for good and evil.

He ought to have a heart full of love and compassion. Cowardly indulgence should be as far from him as rough severity. Gravity and sweetness should be united in him, his earnestness should not offend you, and his mildness should not make you bold.

He ought to be a man to inspire you with confidence; so that you may have no difficulty in opening your heart to him.

He should show the liveliest, most active solicitude for your spiritual welfare. He should prove, that he seeks only your highest interest, only the salvation of your immortal soul at any price.

He ought continually encourage you to the frequent and worthy reception of the Sacraments, and manifest just thereby that he intends to lead you by supernatural means to the supernatural life, and to confirm you in it. O pray, that God may direct you to such a spiritual guide! Seek out some faithful man to go with you in this most dangerous journey from time to eternity!

Thrice happy are you, when you have found him! In him, you have a friend, in the fullest sense of the word; and a faithful friend is the medicine of life and immortality: and they that fear the Lord shall find him. (Ecclus. 6: 16.)

143.

THE LOVE OF GOD.

"*Love is the fulfilling of the law.*" (Rom. 13 : 10.)

Love is that heavenly element, in which and by which holiness lives. Holiness, in its turn, begets love, which is the crown and queen of all virtues.

Wonderful reciprocal relation, founded in the nature of God himself !

God is holy because he loves himself ; and God loves himself because he is holy. If holiness is the cause of his love, love is the cause of his holiness.

Man is holy only in as far as he loves God ; the more ardently he loves God, the holier he is. But he also loves God the more ardently, the holier he is ; and the measure of his holiness is the measure of his love.

Love and holiness resemble two majestic rivers, whose mighty floods, whilst they mingle together, yet retain, intact, their respective and peculiar color and character. They both run to the same sea. The shores of the one are the shores of the other, the bed of the one is the bed of the other. Their waves lean towards each other, they mutually carry each other onward ; and the stronger their united current, the quicker their arrival at their ultimate end.

Tell me how much you love God, and I will tell you how holy you are.

Love is the fulfilling of the law. (Rom. 13 : 10.) The more man loves God, the more perfectly he fulfils his divine commandments.

He is holy who perfectly fulfils the law ; for, in perfectly fulfilling the law, he avoids evil and does good. What is it that urges him to this perfect fulfilment of the law ? Chiefly, love.

The lover is one in whom the action corresponds to the mind ; one who, with all his strength, does the will of him whom he professes to love. The will of God finds its expression in the law ; the most perfect doer of the law is, therefore, also the holiest. Whither, then, does love lead ? To sanctity.

Young man, love God more and more ardently, more and more intimately and actively, and you will become holier and holier, richer and richer in virtues, more and more perfect.

Young man, love is the foundation of all holiness, the measure of all holiness, and the fulness of all holiness.

Why do the blessed inhabitants of heaven always remain Saints ? Because they never cease to love.

Why do they now love God ceaselessly and with such ardor that, in comparison thereto, their love of God whilst upon earth, was scarcely a tiny, wavering spark ? Because now only they are Saints.

Love is the fulfilling of the law. (Rom. 13 : 10.) The bond of perfection is Charity.

Love, then, and love by imitation ; that is, love God as God loves us, giving yourself entirely to him, walking before him, working and suffering for him, and alienating yourself altogether from creatures, for the love of him.

144.

THE MEASURE OF OUR LOVE FOR GOD.

"*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart.*"
(Luke 10 : 27.)

O Lord, thou thyself hast indicated the measure of our love for thee! Thou hast said: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind. (Luke 10 : 27.) Vouchsafe to disclose to me the full meaning of these words, which I now but faintly comprehend.

My son, these words are only an extension of those other words: Love God above all, and as much as you can. Above all; therefore: With thy whole heart. As much as you are able; therefore: With thy whole soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind. All that is in thee must be subservient to this love. There must be no power of the body, no faculty of the soul, which does not tend to it, that is not occupied with it, that does not devote itself to it.

Thou shalt love me with thy whole soul. Your understanding must be directed to me, and ever employed in penetrating deeper and deeper into my perfections.

Your memory should often recall the great benefits which you have received, and daily receive, from me.

Form to yourself principles and maxims grounded upon my love;—principles whose solidity is able to withstand and repel all the corrupt maxims of the world.

Imprint deeper and deeper in your soul my image,—the image of the God-Man. Let it be continually before your eyes,—now, especially, in the years of your youth, that it may be your best safe-guard against the impressions of a wicked world, so vehement, so alluring, so persevering, in its assaults.

Thou shalt love me with thy whole heart. Your will must keep pace with your understanding. Often say: What have I in heaven? and besides thee what do I desire upon earth? (Ps. 72 : 25.) I must be the only object of your desire, since I am the highest good. Subordinate goods must be desired and loved only in a subordinate measure, and in relation to me; but I, in and above all things, for myself alone!

Thou shalt love me with all thy mind. Love should attract your every thought to me; it should make you cling to me with all the fervor and intensity of your intellect. Your youthful mind, so tender and so lively, should have me as its first and chief object.

Thou shalt love me with all thy strength. As no fibre of your heart must withdraw itself from my love, so no power of your body must have any other end but me, your best and highest Good. You are composed of a body and a soul. love is the duty of both,—hence, your body must assist your soul, that she may serve aud glorify me. Senses, limbs, and strength, must be devoted to me; health and life must be devoted to me; acting or suffering, your body must be a victim of love.

Behold, thus shall you love me with your whole heart, with your whole soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind.

O my God, how grudging and ungenerous have I hitherto been towards thee! What must thou think of my ingratitude? O sad truth! I have fixed upon creatures that heart

which belongs to thee, and which should be entirely dedicated to thee. And did I thereby become any richer, any happier ? Alas ! no ! greater and greater became my poverty, more and more gloomy and dismal, the void within me !

O my God, this shall last no longer ; there must be a change, Teach me to love thee as thou deservest, and as it is expedient for me. Grant me one glance into thy infinite and most amiable loveliness—display before me the glorious beauty of thine attributes, that I may burn with love, and give my young heart to thee, whole and undivided, now and for ever more.

145.

THE BENEFITS OF GOD.

"*God is charity.*" (1. John 4 : 8.)

O God, my God, how exceedingly great is thy goodness towards me !

When I consider all that thou hast done for me, the most unworthy creature on the face of the earth, I am deeply abashed, and the superabundance of thy love overwhelms me.

Thou hast called me into existence, and given me the being which I now enjoy ; thou hast drawn me out of nothing, out of the obscurity of eternal forgetfulness, and given me a place among the countless creatures in whom thou dost manifest thy power and goodness.

Thou hast given me this body with its members, with its senses—a master-piece of thy inscrutable wisdom.

Thou hast given me this soul, a spirit created according to thy own image and likeness. My understanding and will are thy gifts, as well as those glorious prerogatives of thought, feeling, and knowledge, which elevate man so high above all animate, inanimate, and irrational creatures. I can know thee, the most perfect Being ; can love thee, the highest Good. O nameless benefit, which constitutes the nobility of my soul and her whole happiness !

Thou hast placed the entire visible creation at my disposal ; it is subject to me, and I am its king. Through it, I can grow in thy knowledge ; through it, I can increase in thy love, availing myself of creatures as so many rounds of a ladder by which I can ascend to heaven.

The good spirits, even those exalted princes of heaven, thou hast given charge over me, to keep me in all thy ways, and to bear me upon their hands, lest I dash my foot against a stone. (Ps. 90 : 11, 12.)

But, in giving me this entire visible world, and the ministrations of the holy Angels, thou thyself drawest near to me, for in thee and through thee, is all, and in every creature there are traces of thy infinite perfections.

Yes, love delights in communication. Even thy essence, O God, thou hast, as it were, communicated to us, by descending from heaven and becoming man—uniting the human and divine natures in one Person, through an unheard-of and incomprehensible love for us.

O ineffable mystery of the Incarnation of the Word . O God, who hast so loved the world as to give it thy only-begotten Son. (John 3 : 16.) For my sake, he comes into this miserable world, taking the form of a servant. (Phil. 2 : 7.) He becomes a weak babe, lives and toils in abject poverty —for me ; he teaches, and goes about doing good (Acts 10 : 38)—for me ; he delivers himself to his enemies, suffers and dies—for me ! When I was not, thou createdst me ;

and when I had gone astray, thou broughtest me back to thyself.

And what wonderful lessons emanated from thy divine lips ! What examples of all virtues didst thou not bequeath as a divine legacy to me !

The establishment of the Church, authorized to continue the work of Redemption, inaugurated by thee ; the means of salvation which thou hast deposited in the bosom of thy Church ; the thrice holy Sacrament, in which thou still continuest to dwell, in order to serve as the food, the nourishment, and the strength of my soul,—all appeal to me as visible memorials of an unbounded love, most powerfully urging upon me a return of love !

Moreover, thou givest thyself to me through the grace which is always at my disposal, which guides, strengthens, and encourages me ; which opens heaven to me, and assists me continually, in order that I may arrive safely at the haven of eternal bliss—the participation of thy own glory.

But, O God of love, these are but the benefits which I share in common with all other men !

In how many things, besides, hast thou not shown special kindness towards me !

The parents whom thou gavest me, all the circumstances and events of my life, joyful or sad, have, no doubt, been wisely ordained for the securing of my temporal and eternal welfare.

What particular talents didst thou not give me ! With what goods of fortune didst thou not favor me ! How many germs of good hast thou not sown in my young heart ! How many special graces and inspirations to repentance ! Now, a gentle voice urging me to confession ; again, breathing within my heart at holy Communion, an ardent impulse pressing me to serve thee more fervently, and to give myself to thee more thoroughly !

How wonderfully hast thou guided the steps of my youth! From how many dangers of body and soul hast thou not rescued me!

With what love and clemency didst thou receive me, thy prodigal son, after this or that aberration!

And, alas! many benefits there are which my soul does not recognize at all, because of its feeble and defective vision.

Ah! the day of judgment will reveal a multitude of graces unknown and unthought of, whereby thou hast, in a special manner, shown thy love for me!

Thy munificence, O God, appears in a still brighter light, when I consider who thou art, and who I am. Apart from the number and magnitude of thy benefits, the infinite distance between the Giver and the receiver, between the manner of giving and receiving, should fill us with awe, and with a still keener appreciation of thy benefits.

Thou, O divine Giver, art the infinite, the eternal, the only great and glorious Being—whilst I—am made in time, out of nothing—am frail, weak, vile, and miserable.

Dost thou, perhaps, love me only as a good sovereign loves his subjects, or as a kind master, his servants? O no! Our Father who art in heaven. (Matt. 6 : 9.) Abba, Father (Rom. 8 : 15), we are thy sons—and thou dost allow us to say that thou lovest us as a Father.

Not to-day, nor yesterday, nor last year, hast thou loved me. I loved thee with an everlasting love (Jer. 31 : 3), thou sayest thyself. From eternity, thou didst think of me, didst make plans for my welfare, didst ordain what thou considerest expedient for my salvation.

And what advantage accrues to thee from all this liberality towards me? Dost thou, perhaps, stand in need of me? Art thou dependent upon a return of love from any of thy creatures? All the beasts of the world are mine, the

cattle on the hills, and the oxen. I know all the fowls of the air, and with me is the beauty of the field. If I should be hungry, I would not tell thee ; for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof. (Ps. 49 : 10-12.)

Thy love, then, is the most disinterested that can be thought of. At all events, thou layest no claim to any recognition or gratitude on my part, which would not in the end benefit myself, and draw down new and greater blessings upon me.

O God, thou art truly all love !

O abyss of goodness ! O ocean of love ! Love without height, without depth, without breadth, without length—boundless love, unsearchable love ! Truly, here deep calleth on deep (Ps. 41 : 8), the depth of thy goodness cries out to the depth of my unworthiness.

O good, magnanimous, disinterested Giver ! what shall I render to thee for all the things that thou hast rendered to me, and still dost render to me ? (Ps. 115 : 12.)

O my God, if, after all these benefits, my heart does not beat only for thee, still its pulses for ever—it is not worthy henceforth to live !

Thou mightest have called into existence some nobler soul than mine,—thou mightest have overwhelmed her with such benefits, as thou hast showered upon me, and doubtless she would have melted away in the glowing fires of divine love, and been consumed in the service of her God,—but my heart—how long will it remain cold—how long, O Lord ! will it resist thy mighty constraining love ?

146.

GRATEFUL LOVE.

"*Let us love God, because God hath first loved us.*"
(1. John 4 : 19.)

Love cannot exist without communication.

It is my turn, O Lord, to reciprocate thy love. I must love thee, because thou hast first loved me. (1. John 4 : 19.)

But how paintully do I now feel my poverty and nakedness, O my best and most disinterested Benefactor!

O that I could multiply myself a thousand times! O that I could dedicate to thee, with my own, thousands and thousands of hearts!

Alas! how little have I that is worthy of thee? Whatever I have, comes from thee; if I offer it to thee, I only offer to thee what is already thine by every just title.

And yet, thou art satisfied with it!

Why do I delay to offer thee, in return for all thy infinite love has done for me, this gift which thou dost ardently desire of me—my heart? My son, give me thy heart.

Accept, O Lord, and take to thyself my whole being,—my liberty, my memory, my understanding, my will. All my possessions, whatever is in me, I owe to thee; thou hast given them to me; I now restore all to thee. I will reserve nothing to myself, but place all at the disposition of thy holy will. Give me only thy love and grace, and I am more than rich;—I desire no more.

Gratitude consists, first and foremost, in an acknowledgment of benefits received.

Then, it consists in the remembrance of those benefits.

Moreover, it consists in the inclination of the will, to requite one's benefactor according to one's ability.

Up to this point, gratitude is interior. The livelier our conviction of indebtedness, the more we appreciate the proofs of our Benefactor's love, the more frequently our memory recalls the benefits received,—the livelier, the truer, the warmer, our desire to love, to delight, to make sacrifices for our Benefactor.

But—does gratitude consist merely in thoughts, feelings, or words? They are but its beginnings, its basis.

God did not content himself with mere sentiment in our regard. I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore, have I drawn thee, taking pity on thee. (Jer. 31 : 3.) Behold the fact! What is there that I should do more to my vineyard, that I have not done to it? (Is. 5 : 4.) Behold the fact! God so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son. (John 3 : 16.) Again, behold the fact!

To be grateful, is to desire, to continually seek, opportunities of causing joy, or of doing some service to one's benefactor. Gratitude means action, sacrifice. The greater the service I am ready to render my benefactor, the more joyful the sacrifice I make for him, the more intimate, the livelier, and truer is my gratitude.

Hence, fire is the symbol of love. The flame continually flickers, it is never at rest; fire consumes; it cannot remain inactive; it communicates itself.

O Lord, how true it is that thou art a consuming fire! (Deut. 4 : 24.) O, that I also were a consuming fire! Break forth, O smouldering flames within my heart,—consume, devour, change. . . . . .

Alas! there is nothing here but coldness, sloth, indifference, inactivity!

O ingratitude ! O torpidity ! Young passionate heart, in other affections so glowing, so susceptible, so excitable, —how can you be so cold and indifferent towards God, your only Good ?

Thou hast come to cast fire upon the earth, O Lord, and what wilt thou but that it be kindled ? Like sparks among the reed, thou hast sown benefits without number or measure over the face of the earth. Those glowing sparks are capable of warming the hardest metal and melting it like wax : many of them have fallen into my heart, and yet, have failed to thaw its icy surface, much less, to melt its frozen depths !

O shame, neglect, contempt ! O responsibility ! Creatures captivate us—God does not ! creatures hold us chained to themselves—God is driven to a remote distance ! Human love is always victorious—the love of God does not conquer !

147.

THE LOVE OF CONFORMITY.

"*Yea, Father ; for so hath it seemed good in thy sight.*"
(Matt. 11 : 26.)

Grateful love makes a sacrifice of the will as well as of the spirit.

If it wishes to be one with God, by thinking of God,—by thinking and judging like God, it will be yet more determined to will what God wills, and as he wills.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. (Matt. 6 :

10.) Thy will be done in me ; thy will be done always, everywhere, and in its entire extent ! My Father, since it hath seemed good in thy sight, my heart is agreed.

Nothing happens, except thou hast willed or permitted it. The morally bad alone comes not from thy will ; its Author thou art not, its Author thou canst never be. With the exception of sin, therefore, which is solely the work of our abused liberty, nothing happens, that is not willed or permitted by thee.

Good things and evil, life and death, poverty and riches, are from God. (Eccles. 11 : 14.) Lots are cast into the laps ; but they are disposed of by the Lord. (Prov. 16 : 33.) Not even a hair falls from our head, not even a sparrow falls to the ground, without the permission of the heavenly Father. (Matt. 10 : 29.)

O consoling truth ! capable of mitigating every pain, of making every difficulty surmountable, of changing every fear into courageous trust !

Do not be staggered by a seeming contradiction. Is not God's will, the holiest and most perfect ? Can he will anything that is not good, that does not agree with his holiest perfection ? And, what concerns us personally, can God, who is charity (1. John 4 : 8), who has proved most practically how well he loves us,—can he will or permit anything that would not be for our advantage ? Must not all things work together unto good, to such as love God ? (Rom. 8 : 28.) And yet, we murmur and repine at the dispensations of Providence, we become quickly pusillanimous, and refuse to commit ourselves entirely to God

In all circumstances of life, young man, say always with the much-tried Job : Blessed be the name of the Lord. (Job 1 : 21.)

In adversity, in loss and misery, say : The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away : blessed be the name of the

Lord. (Job 1 : 21.) For, if we have received good things at the hand of the Lord, why should we not receive evil? (Job 2 : 10.)

In prosperity, when everything goes according to your wishes, again say : Blessed be the name of the Lord !— but, say it sincerely, rejoicing more in the fulfilment of God's will, than in the gratification of your own, or in the temporal advantages and honors accruing therefrom.

It is a great art, young man, to make one's own will conformable to the will of God—an art, which, to be acquired, must be learned and practised early. In youth, everything is more pliable, more docile, more tractable,— the will not excepted. Accustom yourself, then, to conform yours to God's will in all things.

148.

MAGNANIMOUS LOVE.

" *I will spend and be spent.* (2. Cor. 12 : 15.)

Magnanimous love is ever ready to do the holy will of God, even in difficult things ; it works for him with alacrity, and desires to make even greater sacrifices, were they called for.

Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? (Acts 9 : 6.) This is the question which the magnanimous soul asks, without intermission, challenging God, so to say, to impose the heaviest of burdens upon her.

My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready. (Ps. 107 :

2.) O my Lord, and my God (John 20 : 28), is there anything thou canst think of that would be too difficult for my love, too arduous for my courage ? Through thee, my God, I shall go over a wall. (Ps. 17 : 30.) Grant that I may sacrifice myself for thee,—that I may generously spend and be spent in thy service ! Give me strength to do what thou dost wish me to do ; ask of me whatever thou wilt.

O holy combat of love ! The almighty God wrestles with his devoted creature, as Jacob wrestled of old with the angel. And lo ! the mighty One is vanquished ! He retreats, while the loving soul pursues him. God had demanded of it a certain sacrifice, and already it is consummated ; a second sacrifice was required, and it also was not refused. The soul, as it were, rises above her nature. All the wishes of God, even the most far-reaching are within the compass of her efforts. Heroic actions are performed, heroic virtues are practised with ease, as it were, naturally, without any of those ungenerous hesitancies or retrospective regrets, which steal time, and diminish merit.

Young man, do you say that your age is too tender for such unselfish heroism ?

If it is not possible to youth, to what age should it be ? Young people are capable of deeper impressions ; their feelings are livelier, their will, more venturesome, their activity, greater. Enthusiasm is more natural to youth than to maturer years or old age.

Accustom yourself faithfully to follow the gentle inspirations of God. Labor even to outdo the requirements of grace. Prevent the wishes of God. Throw yourself entirely into his arms.

O, what we might become, if we would but place ourselves, entirely and without reserve, at the disposal of God !

Magnanimity of the soul is altogether different from natural great-heartedness and generosity. The latter, it is true

is of divine origin, and serves the former as a basis and support ; but spiritual magnanimity has other things for its object ; its end differs from the means which it employs.

Natural magnanimity divests itself of a certain possession, in favor of its neighbor. Supernatural magnanimity gives itself to God, in order to please him. Understanding, will, liberty, honor, health, life—whatever is dear to us, and, as it were, constitutes one thing with us, the magnanimous soul is ready to sacrifice. It is easy to understand that it is harder to renounce one's will, one's entire being, than merely one's temporal possessions.

Natural magnanimity is often accessible to self-interest ; vanity, ambition, human considerations, are not seldom the chief levers of a magnanimity which has not yet ascended to a thorough detachment from self.

Supernatural magnanimity, on the contrary, aims solely at the glory of God ; it knows that it attains its aim, the more perfectly, the more man divests himself of himself. Therefore, selfish motives disappear as of themselves, since corrupt nature, in such circumstances, far from being gratified, approaches nearer and nearer the final death of self-sacrifice. Victories, on this territory, moreover, are gained only with much pain and labor ; and the magnanimous man is so well aware of his own impotence and of the power of grace, that there can be little question here of self-complacency.

Natural magnanimity has its limits, which are set to it by the manifold and mutable relations between man and man.

The magnanimity of the soul is, in a certain measure, limitless. God, being the highest, the most perfect of Beings, is, therefore, worthy of the highest homage, of the most perfect service. Man is, and always will be, finite ; hence, his service can only be a finite one. Be it ever so great, it always falls infinitely behind what is adequate and justly due.

To the truly magnanimous soul, even the greatest sacrifices appear as nothing. She may have accomplished the most heroic and sublime deeds, yet, to herself, she seems to have done nothing ; and such a one is ever ready to cry out to his divine Master : I am an unprofitable servant. (Luke 17 : 10.) Having God alone always in view, she regards not what she has sacrificed ; she sees only what God properly deserves.

Lord ! the abashed soul cries out, I cannot render thee the service thou dost deserve. O, take me entirely to thyself, and make out of me a sacrifice for thyself, acceptable to thy infinite majesty . Glorify thyself in me, and dispose of me according to thy pleasure !

Do not permit me to apply the weak measure of my misery to the greatness of thy being. Grant me the grace so to think of thee, as becomes thine omnipotence, and to sacrifice myself accordingly !

Seeing the sincerity of such a soul, God showers his grace abundantly down upon her, for he will never permit himself to be outdone in generosity.

And soon the soul knows nothing of pain or difficulty ; every yoke is sweet to her, and every burden light. (Matt. 11 : 30.) She is astonished that God demands so little ; she would be ready for much more difficult things. She cries out : With ease I run the way of thy commandments, since thou dost enlarge my heart. (Ps. 118 : 32.) God operates in her, and she in God her strength is continually renewed ; she takes wings as eagles ; she runs and is not weary ; she walks and faints not. (Is. 40 . 31.)

O generosity ! O magnanimity . O nobility of mind ! O greatness of soul ! as rare as admirable, requited with unspeakable glory by the most just God, who leaves nothing unrewarded, but renders to every one according to his works !

149

THE PRESENCE OF GOD.

"*Walk before me, and be perfect.*" (Gen. 17 : 1.)

My son, you have rightly understood it. The love which you owe me, your Lord and God, your most generous Father and Benefactor, must not stop short at feelings and sentiments, nor manifest itself only in words. You must go farther ; you must act, as well as think, feel, and talk ; you must give yourself to me, as far as your natural weakness will permit.

Listen to an excellent means of manifesting your love for me, and, at the same time, of growing in this love.

When I bestow benefits on you, I do not do it as from a distance, and, as it were, through the hands of others. A prince makes a present to his subject through one of his courtiers ; but I come myself, I am here personally.

Wherever you receive something from me, there I am the giver, with the gift.

There is no being, without me, or, as it were, outside of me. Wherever my creatures live, feel, think, and will,—there, they live, feel, think, and will through me and in me. Animate and inanimate creatures, rational and irrational beings, all exist in and through me.

The higher and more perfect the creature, the more efficacious in it is my creative and preserving power.

You certainly know, how necessary my presence is to all creatures. Would they not return into their original nothing, if I withdraw my hand from them ?

Is their preservation not a continually renewed creation ? Does not what I have created, continue to exist because I, the almighty and omnipresent, uphold all things by the word of my power (Hebr. 1 : 3),—because I support this tender and frail existence of the creature, through my power, and through the means of my unalterable essence, which I have from myself from all eternity ?

Never forget this, my son : A very great love I exhibit to you, by giving you personally every best gift, and every perfect gift. (James 1 : 17.)

And you, too, are solely through me and in me. Yes, through me alone, you are, you live, feel, think, and will. My image I have imprinted in your soul ; according to my likeness, I have created you. You are my consecrated temple ; within you, I dwell, and I am more closely united to you than you are to yourself.

Walk, then, before me, and be perfect. (Gen. 17 : 1.)

Remember, that I am always around you, within you, with you ; this remembrance is the richest source of righteousness.

Say : The Lord is with me,—how can I do a wicked thing before his eyes ? (Gen. 39 : 9.)

Say : The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear ? (Ps. 26 : 1.)

Say : The Lord is with me,—he will direct my youthful steps, teach my inexperience, and support my weakness.

Say : The Lord is with me : before his eyes I do what I do : shall his sight not move me to do what is right ? (Ps. 15 : 8.)

Say : The Lord is with me—my prototype, my model, is before my eyes,—I need only copy what I see.

Say : The Lord is with me,—why should I inordinately long for worldly companions ?

Say : The Lord is with me,—to him, I will tell my grief ; with him, I will seek consolation ; him, will I ask for help.

Yes, walk before me, and you will be perfect. (Gen. 17 : 1.)

May you be enlivened by the spirit of faith, whereby I am always present to you.

Cease not, until, by frequently-repeated acts of such a faith, you have made this a living conviction within you, that it may overflow upon your every-day life, and ennoble and sanctify all your actions.

The levity of your youthful mind may, perhaps, represent to you that this continual recollection would prove burdensome ; but, only make a trial of it, and practice will render it easy and familiar to you.

Only make a trial of it for a little while, and you will soon acquire a certain facility, so that what at first appeared impossible, shall become almost a necessity to you, affording you a spiritual joy, a sweet interior consolation, inexpressibly comforting in the midst of the manifold afflictions and miseries of earth.

150.

CONTINUAL PRAYER.

"*It will be a comfort in my cares and grief.*" (Wisd. 8 : 9.)

Whatever God commands, whatever he counsels, it is in our power to perform, with the assistance of his grace. This is conformable to his wisdom and love.

Let nothing hinder you from praying always. (Ecclus. 18 : 22.)

We ought always to pray and not to faint. (Luke 18 : 1.) Pray without ceasing. (1. Thess. 5 : 17.

Listen to the words of Jesus—to the admonitions of the Holy Spirit !

Do they not assure us that it is possible to pray always, without ceasing ?

What is prayer ? Is it limited to certain forms ? Must it be accompanied by certain outward signs ? Is it to be done only in certain places, and only at appointed times ? Will it, under other circumstances, be deprived of its efficacy ?

In the wider sense of the word, is not prayer, rather every flight of the heart heaven-ward ? every approach to, every union with, God, for which the soul strives in various ways ?

God is a spirit : and they that adore him, must adore him in spirit and in truth. (John 4 : 24.)

God is a spirit ; he is every where ; he is in the midst of us ; he is the witness of even the least motions of our heart ; he notices every (even the weakest) inclination of our will to him.

God is a spirit : a thought of him, a wish to please him, nas just now arisen in you,—and immediately God has knowledge of it, he has received that little tribute of homage, he has opened his Heart to that pious supplication.

Orally, you can pray to him only at certain times ; neither is it possible for you always to meditate ; it is with difficulty that one can uninterruptedly and explicitly remember the presence of God in the midst of the distractions of business and hard work. One thing, however, is not impossible for you,—to preserve your heart in habitual dispositions of love and reverence for God.

Hold fast to such an affectionate disposition ; persevere immovably in your confidence in God ; be always submissive to his holy will. Pay attention to the motions of your conscience and the inspirations of God, and thus you comply always with the injunction of the Apostle, to pray without ceasing.

As the fire once kindled, continues to burn, if it be supplied with fuel from time to time ; so, also, our intercourse with God continues, so long as the soul does not swerve from its direct tendency towards God.

The daily duties of our state of life, are in themselves an excellent prayer, if they are done for God's sake, out of love for him, with a good intention, in a manner and with a perfection corresponding with the nature of the individual actions, and with the holy designs of God in our regard.

Nevertheless, direct and explicit prayer, the proper elevation of the soul to God, even if practised frequently, is not very difficult.

Is it necessary that the prayers you say from time to time, should be long and fatiguing ? Does not God understand or approve of shorter ones ? Must you use only the words of others, or so-called set prayers ? Are the spontaneous aspirations of your own heart, less pleasing to God ?

O holy souls, who so well understood how to direct your prayers, as so many well-aimed darts of love to the very Heart of our amiable God, teach us the art of conversing with him with simplicity and affection, of saluting him as our Lord and Creator, as our Father and Benefactor, as our Friend, Counsellor, and Teacher, adoring him with a few words ; praising and thanking him, asking pardon for our faults , laying before him all our doubts, and humbly imploring his advice and aid !

How much God is pleased, when, like little children with a parent, we communicate to him all our joys and sorrows,

all our hopes and fears. My delights, says he, are with the children of men (Prov. 8 : 31); and our delights should be, to familiarly converse with him, our good and loving God.

O my Father, my Friend, my All,—I, too, will make thee henceforth the confidant of all that passes within me. Like a little child, I will converse with thee. To thee, I will turn in my helplessness, and in the dark moments of my life.

If dangers threaten my youth,—crying out for help, I will turn to thee. If I should have the misfortune to fall, my first word shall be : Pardon ! If youthful impetuosity strives to carry me off, I shall beg of thee not to suffer me to depart from thee. If the alluring call of the world sounds to my ear, it shall be overpowered and drowned by the voice within : My salvation is in God alone ; he suffices, and he, alone !

151.

INTERIOR LIFE.

"*Her conversation hath no bitterness, nor her company any tediousness, but joy and gladness.*" (Wisd. 8 : 16.)

Interior Life ! Young man, this is a new word in your ears, but it is a familiar one to those who have entered upon the way of perfection.

The body lives its life, the soul hers.

The body lives by food, and manifests its life by the ac-

tivity of the senses ; the soul lives by grace, prayer, intercourse with God, and manifests her life by spiritually beholding and hearing God, by speaking and conversing with him, by a thousand mutual relations into which she enters with him. The more frequent, the more natural and intimate, these mutual relations, the greater the fulness of the spiritual life ; the more perfect the life of the soul, the happier she is in that life.

Why do you call a deaf-mute, or a blind man miserable ? Because, you say, he is deprived of a great and essential good, and his life must be, more or less, embittered by his loss. And you are right. The true enjoyment of physical life is in its perfect activity and vigor. A dead life is a contradiction.

To look at God, to listen to his voice, to converse with him, are so many activities of the life of the soul, in which her true happiness consists, and through which she secures her future, everlasting life.

Is he not blind, who, in spite of the belief that God is truly present in his heart, spends whole days without once looking upon this omnipresent God ?

Is he not deaf, who does not understand the language of God—in whose heart the voice of God dies away without an echo ?

Is he not dumb, to whom the language of the heart is unknown—who does not know how to converse interiorly with God ?

Is he not insensible, before whom the wonders of God's goodness, greatness, holiness, and justice pass without making any impression—from whom benefits evoke as little filial gratitude as terrifying judgments elicit slavish fear?

Such a one is interiorly dead, or, at least, in a deadly, lethargic slumber. He betrays no sign of life.

To lead an interior life, on the other hand, is to turn

one's interior faculties and powers to God, the omnipresent, and to exert their activity in his service.

Withdraw your heart more and more from creatures ; enter into yourself ; hearken, and speak, to God !

Behold, says the Lord, I stand at the door, and knock : if any man shall hear my voice, and open to me the gate, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. (Apoc. 3 : 20.) This spiritual supper is the intimate intercourse with God, whereby the soul is nourished and refreshed, wherein she finds sweetness and indescribable delights.

Ah ! only too much does our heart resemble the open market-place of a populous city, in which congregate all sorts of creatures,—animals and men, great and small, young and old, good and bad !

Why do we not turn that poor heart into a sanctuary, into a calm retreat of purity and holiness, whence is excluded all the turmoil and corruption of the world ?

O lovely, agreeable retirement ! O sweet solitude, enlivened by God's presence ! O co-habitation with God ! which, far from causing dissatisfaction and tediousness, produces the most delicious consolation, holy joy and gladness. (Wisd. 8 ; 16.)

O refreshing recollection of the spirit, so rich in fruits of grace and divine visitations ! Who would not exchange this dear solitude for all the friendships, all the hollow pleasures and foul joys of the world !

Young man, many prejudices against the spiritual life may arise in you. In many respects, it may appear to you strange, extraordinary.

You imagine this interior recollection will render you odd and singular, out of harmony with your fellow-men.

Who has told you that you must withdraw yourself from necessary and even useful intercourse with the outside world ? Hold intercourse where it is required, and with

whom it is useful, in an amiable, unpretentious, cheerful, though somewhat reserved, manner—in a way that edifies the neighbor, and does not separate you from God.

Have the Saints been useless, uncongenial members of human society? Were they not men of God, men of prayer, men of recollection, spiritual men? Many among them were very active in forming or influencing destinies of nations,—effecting more by a word, than armies could with all their might and valor. You see, then, that the interior life does not hinder a man's activity, or paralyze his energy in temporal affairs; it gently rules his whole being; it purifies his motives, gives him a higher dignity, and on the wings of divine love, transfers it into a pure, supernatural sphere.

You imagine that interior recollection causes the mind to become wrapped up in itself, morose, and inaccessible; that it robs youth of its freshness and vivacity.

O, do not always confound the dominion of nature with that of grace. Should not grace be able to effect in the soul, what the soul effects in the body? Does it not proceed from him who is life, activity, knowledge, will, and love itself? And does not grace give life in abundance?

True, your cheerfulness will assume another character; it will strip itself of its impetuosity and excitability; it will cease to be noisy, purely exterior; but does it not, on that very account, become truer and nobler? O friend, where God reigns, there joy reigns! Truly, the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but justice, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. (Rom. 14: 17.)

Learn, then, that it is possible to be outwardly active, and at the same time, inwardly recollected. Examples prove this fact. Are you not the master of your own house? Can you not go in and out, according to your own pleasure? Does it not depend upon you to admit into your heart, or to exclude from it, what and whom you will? Can you not

rather lend yourself, than deliver and sell yourself, to your occupations ?

What cannot one do, if he firmly wills it, and depends upon the divine aid ?

152.

OBSTACLES TO UNION WITH GOD.

"*My eyes and my heart shall be there always.*"
(3. Kings 9 : 13.)

How few young men are there that lead a truly interior life ! Even among pious, serious men of mature years, are to be found very few interior souls, much less among the young.

True, the latter meet with more difficulties in the pursuit of the interior life.

Youth itself is the chief difficulty.

The mind is volatile,—it passes quickly from one subject to another. Only with great labor can it be long fixed upon any given subject.

The imagination is immediately captivated and filled with every object that presents itself ; the mind is absorbed and obscured by vagaries.

The impression made upon the senses finds more speedy entrance into the heart. For this reason, the outside world is everything to the young man.

Whatever tends to fix his attention upon himself, is ever irksome to him—it seems to him a check, an encroachment, on his liberty, a curb to his youthful activity.

Add to this, that through the power of circumstances, he is dragged into the outside world. As to his companions—are they not principally those of his own stamp,—gay, frivolous young fellows, who know nothing of the earnestness of life, to whom the present moment is everything, who not only have no conception of the inner life, and desire to have none, but even ridicule piety, making free use of the words bigotry, fanaticism, enthusiasm, eccentricity ?

No wonder that, among such associates, the young man becomes disgusted, or, at least, finds it difficult to take any interest in spiritual things, to remain recollected, to strive for the necessary stability to live in, and for, God.

Moreover, if the members of his family are worldly-minded and wanting in piety ; if he sees nothing in his own home but vanity, frivolity, extravagance, love of display, it will be almost impossible for him to walk in the strait, self-denying way of the interior life.

What is to be done ?

First of all, young man, do not give way to despondency ; with God's help and assistance, be firmly determined to enter upon a spiritual life.

The difficulties are not insurmountable. Numberless examples prove this. Think of St. Aloysius, of St. Casimir, of St. Stanislaus Kostka.

Arm yourself with courage. Despise that great fool called the world. You cannot serve two masters. (Matt. 6 : 24.) Long ago, you declared : The Lord is the portion of my inheritance (Ps. 15 : 5) ; my life is Christ. (Phil. 1 : 21.)

Oppose the spirit of the world with the most courteous indifference. Be manly. Do not provoke it, do not challenge it ; at the same time, pay no attention to its judgments and censures. You know what to think of its maxims and examples. Its ways and your ways differ so much,

that a compromise is not possible; leave it, and go your own way. Walk in that path which your conscience and the voice of God point out to you, which your spiritual director sanctions and approves of.

Be not gloomy and repulsive. Do not make a show of piety and virtue; it is enough for God to know who you are, and what is passing within you.

Here, build a cell for yourself; here, fix your sanctuary, the holy place wherein God is adored in spirit and in truth. (John 4: 24.) Though it stand isolated, as once stood the temple of Sion amid the countless idolatrous temples of the wide earth, only the more gladly will the eye of God rest upon it. He will regard it with favor, surrounded though it be by the abomination of desolation, by the idolatry of egotism, of wealth, of sensuality and pride.

Yes, says the Lord, there shall be my name for ever; there shall my eyes rest with delight, and my heart shall dwell in such hearts for ever more. (3. Kings 9: 3.)

Having once detached yourself from the world, and placed yourself on that height of manly and Christian independence, turn against yourself, and drive from the sanctuary of your heart, everything that would desecrate it, everything that might disturb its sacred calm, or profane the unceasing worship, to which it is now dedicated.

Bridle your senses. Eye, ear, and tongue should be continually guarded and restrained. Modesty, retirement, and silence are the amiable and godlike companions of the true interior life.

Repress all vain curiosity: indulge not in useless talk: silence is golden.

Prevent every disorder in your interior, and quell every rising of the passions.

Interfere in nothing that does not concern you; or, as the common saying is: Mind your own business. You are not

responsible except for that which duty and charity demand of you.

O good God ! when will our hearts resemble the smooth surface of a calm, sheltered lake ? Now, they resemble more a tempestuous sea—naught is to be seen but mountainous billows, tumult, destruction !

153.

CONVERSE WITH JESUS IN THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT.

"*I sat down under his shadow, whom I desired : and his fruit was sweet to my palate.*" (Cant. 2 : 3.)

As you well know, our Saviour willed to become not only our food in the Most Holy Sacrament, but also to be our loving friend and companion, our confidant, our counsellor, our consolation, in this earthly life.

For this reason, he abides day and night upon our altars, in our tabernacles. For this reason, he pitched his tent in the midst of Israel, that visibly, under the species of bread, he might be our God, and we, his people. (Jer. 11 : 4.) Truly, there is no other nation so great, that hath gods so nigh them. (Deut. 4 : 7.)

But, O shame ! how few Christians think of this extraordinary love ! They leave our divine Lord alone on his altar ; they assist only on Sundays and festivals at the holy Sacrifice, when strict duty obliges them ; they never visit

him at other times, and scarcely seem to know, that he who constitutes the bliss of the Blessed, sits so close to us on his throne, and showers heavenly joys upon those who believingly approach him.

Day and night, the sacred halls are empty,—whilst the eternal High-Priest, Jesus Christ, stands alone therein, supplicating, and making intercession for us, his people, the sheep of his pasture. (Ps. 78 : 13.)

O spirit of faith, how weak art thou within us ! O marvel of the most magnanimous love ! how little fruit thou bearest in us, the privileged children of God, who are bound to return him, at least, the homage of our gratitude. How is it with you ? How do you act, young man ? From time to time, at long intervals, you go to holy Communion, to assist at the holy Sacrifice of the Mass on Sundays, and perhaps, sometimes, on a week-day. As for the rest, you scarcely ever visit Jesus in the holy Sacrament of the Altar.

Ah ! no—you have no time ; it is too troublesome ; you do not know what to do with yourself in church ; the time there hangs heavy upon your hands.

Is it not so ? If you find it so onerous to hear a Mass on week-days, how can it be expected of you, that you should go to church at an extraordinary time, and spend hours there in prayer ?

But, there is no question about hours, nor about even a quarter of an hour.

In going to or from your place of business, you pass by a church ; you are alone. Enter into the holy place, bend your knees, salute your Saviour briefly and cordially, tell him what you would say to a dear friend, if by chance you should meet him, and then depart, newly refreshed by the benign words which Christ, on his part, will gladly say to you.

Perhaps, you will have to go out of your way a little in

order to reach a church ; make the effort, if you have the time. To gratify idle curiosity, to see something beautiful, to hear some frivolous news, and to take part in some sinful enjoyment,—people often walk great distances, and spend much time and money.

Is it then asking too much if, sometimes, of an afternoon or evening, you are urged to sacrifice a quarter of an hour in order to visit the court of your great and good King, and pay him your humble homage ?

O miserable, grudging spirit, in direct contradiction to our extravagance in worldly things ! How many hours are wasted in the most useless discourses and conversations !

How much time is consumed in the care for our body, in our worldly occupations, our guilty enjoyments !

Is it then a loss to devote a few moments to God ? Is he not well able to requite us for such trifling sacrifices ?

Perhaps you reply : Who ever heard of young men going to church at unusual, extraordinary times ?

Good friend, if no one makes the beginning, surely such an edifying sight will never be seen.

And, after all, is it really so unheard-of ? O no, there are many pious young men, who live near a church, and make good use of their proximity to their Saviour. Pay attention,—and perhaps you will daily find them in some nook or corner of the church at an altogether unusual time.

What is one to do in such visits ?

What do you do yourself when visiting some dear friends ? You unbosom yourself, you ask and answer questions, you speak, you listen, you speak again, you go away after a friendly shaking of hands, and you feel very well that the friendship on both sides is mutually strengthened.

It is hard to say how much a loving and familiar intercourse with Jesus in his holy Sacrament, tends to lead a soul to a higher perfection,

And yet, you know that it must be so. Jesus is our Life—that Life is here close to us on our altars. There, he gives life the more abundantly, the more sincerely and self-sacrificingly it is sought by us.

How many salutary feelings, how many blessed resolutions, are made at the steps of the holy altar, in the solitude of the house of God! How often the germ of future meritorious deeds is there cast by the heavenly Gardener into the well-prepared heart, in order to ripen later into glorious fruit!

O thou hidden God! draw us close to thee in this adorable Sacrament! Permit not thy love and devotedness to be forgotten or abused by us.

No, O Jesus, henceforth, I will be of the number of those favored young men (few though they be) who know how to find a moment now and then to prostrate themselves at the foot of thy tabernacle, in order to greet thee lovingly, to adore thee reverently, to keep thee company for a little while, to communicate to thee the secrets of their hearts, and finally, to depart accompanied by thy blessings, enriched with new merits, refreshed by the thought of having given thee a little joy. I shall sit under his shadow, whom I desire: and his fruit is sweet to my palate. (Cant. 2 : 3.)

At such visits, I will communicate spiritually, will excite in myself a most lively desire to unite myself to thee, to enjoy thee sacramentally, and receive thee into a pure heart.

O, by that means, I might arrive at that interior recollection and fervor which characterizes holy souls,—at that pure, celestial atmosphere wherein, alone, the flowers of Christian virtue thrive, and wherein my youth is safely defended against outward and inward storms and temptations!

154.

DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS.

"*My son, give me thy heart.*" (Prov. 23 : 26.)

Among the many devotions in the course of time introduced among the faithful, and proving exceedingly profitable for the salvation of souls, there is one, which, above all others, is full of significance, because, above all others, it permeates our inner life, and divinizes, so to speak, the heart of the Christian. This is *the devotion to* "THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS."

In fact, a devotion whose results are all interior, and fraught with the spirit of self-sacrifice, cannot but be of the highest significance for the perfection of man. Interior recollection is one of the chief foundations of true Christian perfection, the spirit of self-sacrifice is its summit ; and both united and mutually supporting each other, make man a saint.

All depends on the heart ; if this is right, the whole man is right. If the heart is full of God, the whole man is full of God ; if the heart belongs to God, the whole man belongs to God. And *vice versa*.

The heart is the seat of the affections ; there, enthusiasm is inflamed ; there, the will prepares its acts. The heart loves, is zealous, consumes itself ; the heart is sympathizing, liberal, generous. A bad heart, a bad man ; a noble heart, a noble man ; a man of heart, a man of action.

To the Heart of the God-Man, Jesus Christ, to his bod-

ily heart, in as far as it is inseparably united with the divinity, we owe adoration. Behold the immediate object of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus !

No less does the Sacred Heart of Jesus deserve veneration, since it is the seat of the holiest sentiments that ever existed in any bosom ; the furnace of that glowing love, which has set on fire a whole world ; the abode of divine, unspeakable virtues, whose imitation deify the children of Adam.

Do you surmise what a treasure of blessings the Heart of Jesus could be to you ?

The virtues need to take root ; the soil of the virtues is the heart. There is no virtue without the breath of life, and this breath is the spirit that breathes over us, the soul that vivifies all.

Our actions correspond with our spirit ;— they are either little or great, good or bad, mean or exalted, cold or ardent, according to the spirit from which they spring.

Astonishing are the acts of Jesus ! What is it that gives them such an elevation and sublimity ? The Heart from which they proceed.

How can you ever become a perfect Christian, if you do not penetrate into the interior of Christ ? There, you must learn why to act, how to act, what to detest, what to love.

Contemplate the Heart of Jesus ! How submissive is it to the heavenly Father ! Jesus regards himself as a victim, destined to restore to the Father the honor of which he had been deprived, to make the most ample and complete atonement to the divine Justice. Hence, he lives only for the honor of his Father ; he knows only his will ; he strives only for union with him. My food is to do the will of him that sent me, that I may perfect his work. (John 4 : 34.)

How has the Heart of Jesus loved men ? Love guided every one of his steps here upon earth ; he succumbed to

love on the cross ; out of love, he is present in the Sacrament of the Altar. Love without measure, love without repose, love for all, love to the end, love for ever and for ever. Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends. (John 5 : 13.)

What were his sentiments towards himself ? Humility, forgetfulness of self, complete sacrifice and self-annihilation. He regards himself as the guilty one, the victim, worthy of all punishment : I am a worm, no man, the reproach of the people. He was wounded for our iniquities, he was bruised for our sins, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his bruises we were healed. (Is. 53 : 5.)

Behold the Heart of Jesus ! By such a spirit all the actions of Jesus were guided.

Is not such a Heart amiable above measure ? Should it not be able to captivate our hearts for ever to itself ? Is it not in the highest degree worthy of imitation ? Should it not be made the rule of our thoughts, our will, our sentiments ?

How shall we ever learn to act perfectly, unless we penetrate into the Heart of Jesus ? As there is no other name through which we can be saved, but the victorious and glorious name of Jesus, so there is no other teacher through whom we can be instructed in the way of perfection and sanctity, but the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

We shall ever remain beginners, never penetrating into the depths of perfection, never arriving at thorough, solid, manly, heroic virtue, never acquiring a spirit of self-sacrifice, never elevating ourselves to the heights of a sublime and complete devotedness, if we do not learn to know the Sacred Heart of Jesus, or, at least, if we do not in some measure seek to comprehend it.

Young man, before and above all, let it be your business to revere the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Has it not loved you with a particular love ?

Has it not given to your youth the most beautiful example ? What purity, what disinterestedness, what peacefulness, what fervor of prayer, what fidelity to duty, what unselfish activity !

Go, and study the Heart of the young man Jesus, and learn to be a Christian young man.

Your whole heart is yet to be educated ; your self-education is undoubtedly the most important task of your young years. What other pattern or model are you looking for ?

You ask, in what does devotion to the Heart of Jesus consist ?

It consists, according to the inner essence, in this : That you penetrate more and more into his holy Heart ; that you appreciate more and more its unfathomable love ; that you endeavor more and more to conform your own heart to his.

Exteriorly, it consists in certain public or private exercises of devotion. Pious persons, for instance, are accustomed, every year, to consecrate to special practices of love and reparation, the Friday after the Octave of Corpus Christi, which the Church celebrates as the festival of the Sacred Heart. Moreover, they dedicate to the same holy exercises the first Friday of every month. On these days, they receive holy Communion, or visit the Blessed Sacrament, and make the usual act of reparation before it. Many make use daily, even several times a day, of the pious ejaculation :

> Heart of Jesus, burning with love for me,
> Inflame my heart with love for thee !

I presume, you know why the devotion to the Sacred Heart is so intimately connected with the most holy Sacrament of the Altar.

In the Sacrament of the Altar, with the other members of his glorious humanity, the Sacred Heart of Christ is

also present ; and consequently, that Sacrament is the centre whence the measureless love of the Saviour flows in streams over the whole world.

Again : the Most Holy Sacrament is the marvelous masterpiece of love. It was love that induced Jesus to institute the mystery of his flesh and blood ; love confines him on our Altars ; love sweetens for him the solitude of the tabernacle ; love moves him to expose himself to dishonors of all kinds.

With love, he embraces all who approach him, whether it be to receive him for the nourishment of their souls, or to visit him and pay him their homage.

Again, Jesus in the Blessed Eucharist practises virtues the imitation of which leads infallibly to the summit of holiness. Learn of me, he exclaims from the tabernacle, because I am meek, and humble of heart. (Matt. 11 : 29.) Truly, Jesus here, is humble, meek, and patient. And what a hidden life ! What activity of prayer and fervor of the soul ! What liberality towards all who approach, or make the least attempt to visit him !

For this last reason, devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus bears the special character of atonement. The clients of that divine Heart are accustomed to make acts of reparation to it for all the irreverence, coldness, ingratitude, neglect, and cruelty of unbelieving men and careless Christians.

O incomprehensible, O love-consumed heart of my Saviour ! not in vain shalt thou say to me : My son, give me thy heart. Here, best-beloved Jesus, is this heart which thou so glowingly desirest,—this poor, cold, loveless heart. O change it, and restore it to me cleansed and inflamed with thy love. Fulfil thy promise : I will give you a new heart, and put a new spirit in you. And I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh,—a susceptible, a feeling, a grateful, a liberal, a generous heart,—a heart according to my heart ! (Ezech. 36 : 26.)

155.

ACTIVE LOVE.

"*He that feareth God, neglecteth nothing.*"
(Eccles. 7 : 19.)

The Lord's presence in his creatures is by no means inactive.

Does he not move them ? Does he not rule them ? Does he not lead them to their end ? Is it not as if he worked in them ?

Yes, God labors, so to say, for me, he is active for me ; he works, toils, and, as it were, fatigues himself, for me.

Jesus Christ, the God-Man, my Redeemer, not only worked, labored, and fatigued himself for me, but he even suffered, shed sweat and blood, endured every kind of torment and humiliation, and finally, laid down his life, —for me. Moreover, he still labors and suffers, to the same end, in the most holy Sacrament of the Altar.

But, though God works, he does not lose his repose ; he is active, yet he abides in peace ; he sacrifices himself for us, yet his happiness experiences no diminution.

O Lord, how thy love abashes me !

I am, it is true, inclined to love thee ; but this, my love, must be something agreeable to me, it must cost me nothing.

My love is not strong or heroic ; it cannot rise to the sublime heights of self-sacrifice.

And besides, you may say, young man, there is very little opportunity offered me to return the active love of my God!

You greatly err. There are opportunities, all day long.

The day is made up of actions—actions corresponding to the duties of your state of life. These actions demand attention, devotedness, energy.

Do you perform them rightly? Do you put into them that perfection corresponding to the greatness and amiability of him, for whose honor and glory you profess to do them?

How blind we often are! How short-sightedly we often judge. We lay stress upon great deeds, and despise little things. And yet, opportunities for great deeds seldom offer themselves, while the lesser ones fill up our days. The Scripture very significantly says: He that feareth God, neglecteth nothing. (Eccles. 7 : 19.)

The spirit, the intention, of our actions is everything. We work for God,—hence, we must work perseveringly, and in the most perfect manner possible. God is always perfect, always immutable, always infinitely deserving of our love; consequently, he is always worthy of the same careful service, the same self-sacrificing love, yesterday, to-day, to-morrow, now, and for ever more!

Make no distinction between duty and duty. Say not: This is a serious matter—that other is not; the neglect of this duty may draw grave consequences after it, the non-performance of the other is of no account! He who fears the Lord, he who is devoted to him, in truly filial, submissive, and reverential love, regards nothing as little. Love will have its sway, here as well as there; the heart of the creature will aspire to the heart of God—now and for ever. Beauty ever ancient, yet ever new—my love, old, yet ever fresh and unimpaired!

Behold, here, the means to prove the sincerity of your love! Do as God does; whatever you do, do it with the complete participation of your whole being; put a little more love—yea, all your love—into every single work, into every single, ever-so-little duty, and perform each act as if your eternal salvation depended upon it alone.

Faithfulness in little things—O word full of profound sense! O word of terror to the tepid soul! O word of sweet, consoling harmony to the fervent Christian!

Faithfulness in little things—O short compendium of the most exalted sanctity!

Faithfulness in little things—O thorny, but direct, way to thorough perfection!

Faithfulness in little things—O heroism of love, O service of self-sacrifice, O martyrdom, available to all!

This faithfulness in little things, I admit, is difficult to your youthful levity and inconstancy—you glide so easily over everything, especially over objects seemingly unimportant.

Do violence to yourself. For the future, lay stress on little things. Prove that your love permanently consents to sacrifice; that it is eager, indefatigable; that you are always conscious of acting for God, and that you perform all your duties, the greater, as well as the lesser, for God's sake!

156.

PASSIVE LOVE.

"*Patience hath a perfect work.*" (James 1 : 4.)

Gold is purified in the furnace, and love, in trials and sufferings.

Not every one that saith: Lord, Lord, shall enter into

the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 7 : 21), because not every one's life corresponds with the given promise. Many speak of the love of God, but their deeds belie their words.

He who gladly and willingly receives crosses from God, he who is patient under trials, and ready to accept greater ones—he, alone, truly knows how to love.

Who would not gladly ascend with Jesus to Mount Tabor, there to share in his glorification? But if there be question about Gethsemane, or, worse still, Mount Calvary, we stand still and suffer Jesus to go thither alone.

True love is strong as death, inexorable as the grave; its breath is of fire and of flames. Death never relinquishes its prey; the grave never gives back its dead; the fiery furnace relentlessly consumes whatever comes within its reach. So does love.

If you really love God, if you are truly united to him, nothing will be able to separate you from him. On the contrary, sufferings will unite you to him all the closer, the more they delude you from earthly things.

Youth is not often rich in sufferings and tribulations; maturer years generally bring crosses and trials. Life, as it lengthens, becomes earnest with cares and privations; disagreeable things occur; vexations, unpleasant and sad experiences, embitter our old age. When the body becomes weaker, when sickness decays, and death knocks at our door,—then, come the days of which it is said: They please me not. (Eccles. 12 : 1.)

But, young man, will you not, at least, submissively and patiently, support those petty trials, those little annoyances and disappointments, from which no age or state is exempt?

No. The least indisposition, a little pain, a slight mishap, a hard word, a rebuke, a trifling disappointment, bad luck in play, a small loss, a little inconvenience from the

weather, an insignificant privation, hunger, thirst,—all these excite you, upset you, disturb your peace, put you out of humor, breed in you discontent, vexation, anger. You break out into complaints ; you give way to violence or depression, as one who has been wronged ; you murmur against God ; you curse yourself and your existence.

O good God—and yet, we say we love thee ! O contradiction !

How will it be later on, when you drain deeper and deeper the bitter dregs of this fearful life, when hardships of all kinds,—oppressive cares, fatiguing labors, troubles from within and from without, on the right and on the left, from below and from above,—break in upon you,and,as it were, conspire to embitter your life and strew your path with thorns ? Do you not know, that impatience, peevishness, discontent, resistance to God, will only increase your misery ?

As a child, in its foolish anger, strikes the knife wherewith it has imprudently wounded itself, or altogether destroys the toy which it has just broken, so we act, when, in our impatience, we irritate the wounds caused by sufferings and trials.

There is no more excellent opportunity of manifesting and proving our love, as well as of benefiting ourselves, than by sufferings.

By them, we show how dear God is to us. By them, we manifest, how highly we value what our Lord has done for us, the sufferings which he endured for our sake. Gratitude would fain express itself by like means.

Patience, moreover, mitigates the pain, pours balm into the wound, stops its further progress.

Patience atones for sins, and bears well-deserved punishments.

Patience enriches us with merits.

Patience makes us resemble Christ.

Patience places us beside the martyrs.

Patience is the pliable metal, out of which the golden key of heaven is made.

In a word : Patience hath a perfect work (James 1 : 4), and assures us of the full possession and salvation of our souls : In your patience you shall possess your souls. (Luke 21 : 19.)

157.

MORTIFICATION.

"*I fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh.*" (Col. 1 : 24.)

Shall the God-loving soul stop at mere sufferings?

O no! Love is restless, love is generous.

Love not only bears with cheerful resignation the unavoidable sufferings wherewith God visits it,—but it goes forth to search for crosses, for all that is repugnant to nature, annoying to sensuality, hurtful to self-love, and death to the old man within us.

How ingenious and inventive were the Saints in the practice of mortification!

They granted themselves rest neither by day nor by night ; they treated themselves as their own worst enemies. Mortification of the whole sinful man, restraint of the senses, renunciation, self-denial,—to these things were directed all their thoughts and endeavors.

To avoid merely what was forbidden, was by far too little for their zeal. Only then did they believe themselves to be somewhat secure, when they had learned to renounce even lawful things.

They imposed privations upon themselves ; they tortured their bodies with instruments of penance,—with fasting, nakedness, and weary vigils ; they labored not only to repress the exuberance of their evil passions, but to eradicate their very roots, and smother them in the germ. They were always at war with themselves ; not confining themselves to mere self-defence, they began the attack, and pursued the enemies of God and of their salvation with irresistible impetuosity.

All this is not done without suffering and sorrow. Human nature feels every sting of such austerity and severity. It groans acutely under the stripes which strike at the roots of the most hidden passions. But the Saints looked only to God,—they had only their spiritual advantage in view. Incessantly the image of their suffering Redeemer hovered before their souls, causing them to break out into the words : Only by sufferings, shall we be true members of our suffering head Jesus Christ ! I fill up those things, says St. Paul, that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh. (Col. 1 : 24.)

I, also, am a member of Christ ; if I desire to have part with Christ, I must suffer with him, contribute my share in sufferings, and thus, form the suffering Christ in myself. I owe it to Christ, I owe it to the Church, which is his body, that I suffer ; but I owe it also to myself,— for the joys of heaven are proportionate to the measure of our sufferings on earth.

Terror seizes you, young man, at the mere mention of mortification, self-denial, self-crucifixion ! Perhaps, heretofore, even the very words were unknown to you.

But, are you not also a disciple of Christ Crucified ?

Are you not a brother of those heroes who crucified their flesh with all its concupiscences ? (Gal. 5 : 24.)

Son of holy ancestors, scion of noble sires, deny not your

extraction,— be not ashamed of the cross of your Master.

Youth does not exempt you ; on the contrary, it is one of the strongest motives to practise what should be the virtue of all Christians.

Who is threatened with greater dangers than the young man ? For whom does Satan spread more terrible snares ? Whom does the world encircle more deceitfully ? Whose passions ferment more vehemently ? In whose bosom does nature rage more powerfully ? In whose veins does the blood flow hotter ? Whose flesh seeks more madly and presumptuously to free itself from the control of reason ? Who is more eager than the young man, for enjoyments, for all sorts of amusements, lawful or unlawful ? Who throws himself more wildly into the vortex of a dissipated life, tossing daringly from one billow of excitement to the other,— unconcerned as to whether they will land him on the shores of heaven or hell ? Shall mortification to such a one be superfluous—useless—unnecessary ?

Ah ! how many young men are there who live only for their own passions, for their senses, their gross self-indulgence ! They know nothing of that holy violence which alone can open the golden portals of heaven. They are anything but cross-bearers ; they evade every thorn they chance to meet on the way. Only flowery paths are acceptable to them ; the ground beneath their feet, must be always smooth and pleasant.

No wonder that there are so few holy young men ! No wonder that there are so many bad, vicious young men ! He that nourishes his servant delicately from his childhood, afterwards shall find him stubborn (Prov. 29 : 21) ; and : A horse not broken, becometh stubborn, and a child left to himself, will become headstrong. Give thy son his way, and he shall make thee afraid : play with him, and he shall make thee sorrowful. (Ecclus. 30 : 8, 9.)

You certainly do not fear for your health, for your life ?

Behold, a great many Saints have lived to a ripe old age ; sobriety and austerity of life secured to them more years, than did abundance and a luxurious life to others.

O, little suffices for the body ; it can endure more than we imagine. Meanwhile, your own prudence, as well as that of your spiritual director, will surely indicate to you the right limits.

At any rate, there is no question here of extraordinary penances. Faithful love and constant perseverance give even to lesser renunciations value before God.

The mortification of the inner man,—of self-love, impatience, levity, irritability, curiosity, extravagance at all events, is entirely free from danger ; it is beneficial to the body as well as to the soul.

The practice of mortification, without which we can never arrive at Christian perfection, presupposes a certain recollection of spirit. Without such, many daily and hourly opportunities may glide away unemployed. Now, it is the eyes—then, the ears ; now, the sense of smell—then, the palate, the love of ease, of comfort, of convenience ; now, a too great impetuosity ; again, garrulity, inordinate sadness, excess or extravagance, peevishness, caprice, inconstancy, on which we can impose sacrifices, to which we can offer renunciation.

How many opportunities daily !

Comprehend it at once and for all : Your spiritual progress depends entirely on this, that you mortify yourself, that you do violence to yourself.

Overcome yourself !—let these words continually sound in your ears. No victory more glorious than that which man gains over himself ; no battles, at the same time, hotter, than those which are fought in the field of his hidden heart.

The Passion of Christ will strengthen me. If, as a youth, I succeed in mastering myself, in demanding sacrifices of myself at pleasure, how easy will it be to me as a mature man, to walk the way of duty, of renunciation, of self-sacrifice !

How grandly those frequent, though small, acts of self-conquest strengthen the will ! Effeminacy and deplorable self-indulgence, on the contrary, can lead only to a total relaxation, a boundless impotence, which delivers itself without resistance to the caprices of the flesh and to the snares of the world and the devil.

158.

THE LOVE OF THE CROSS.

" *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.* " (Gal. 6 : 14.)

Lord, how many things are there that I must yet learn ! I hear of sufferings, and I tremble ; I read of the love of suffering, and I understand nothing.

Yes, my son, there are yet many things of which you are ignorant. But it is time now, at least, that you should be made acquainted with the science of the Cross. There is but one school for this branch of divine knowledge ; it is called the School of Practice. Study here is necessary, but practice still more necessary. Teaching shows the way, practice goes the way.

O, if you did but know the gift of God ! (John 4 : 10.)

If you did but know what treasures are hidden in the cross,—not only would you never envy the so-called happy ones of this earth, but you would commiserate them, you would tremble for them : they would appear to you as poor and needy, as being in imminent danger, threatened with a great calamity.

Happiness and prosperity often lead to the forgetfulness of me, your God. In moments of success, man becomes haughty and overbearing ; he trusts in himself, he imagines that he stands in no need of me.

Crosses and afflictions preserve humility. In his misfortunes, man feels how miserable he is ; he looks for a support, he craves for consolation ; he looks up to heaven, and clings to me.

In joy and prosperity, man attributes to the things of this world a higher value than they possess ; he expects from them a lasting felicity.

Crosses and afflictions detach him from earthly things ; tney teach him to prize highly that only which deserves high esteem ; they teach him to yearn after purer and more permanent goods.

Happiness and prosperity rob the heart of liberty—they offer it, so to say, a sort of violence ; at least, they bribe it, and fill it with prejudices Man becomes the slave of temporal goods. They become the aim of his senses ; they regulate his humors, they determine his peace, his joy, his tranquillity, his torment.

Crosses and afflictions elevate the soul above this earth. Every time you detach yourself from a temporal good, a link of that burdensome chain which hinders your flight to heaven, falls to the ground.

Were not my cross worthy of love, what is so salutary, what brings us such invaluable advantages ?

Look upon me, your Saviour, your model in all things !

What makes you more like me, than sufferings ? Son, it is a great honor to share my ignominy, my pains, my cross— the cross of the Son of God.

Do you not hear the Apostle exclaim : God forbid that I should glory, but in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ ? (Gal. 6 : 14.) I judged not myself to know anything among you, he says again, but Jesus Christ, and him crucified. (1. Cor. 2 : 2.)

Finally, look at the reward. Remember : The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us. (Rom. 8 : 18.) And again : The present tribulation, which is momentary and light, worketh for me above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory. (4. Cor. 2 : 17.)

Lord, I comprehend what thou sayest, and I feel within me a strong desire to put thy doctrine into practice But how shall I do it ? I am young, and there is little opportunity for me to suffer. I am young, and I am urged to avoid and escape sufferings, which by no means seem befitting my age.

My son, make use of daily, little opportunities. Bear with patience those petty trials which pursue man, like his shadow, in this valley of tears. Support them with interior and exterior cheerfulness and equanimity. Whatever painful things malicious men, or changing elements, may prepare for you,—daily hardships, bodily miseries, spiritual needs, all the labors, toils, fatigues, and unpleasantness of life, great and small,—take all courageously upon yourself ; be glad and rejoice that you are accounted worthy to suffer a little for me whom you profess to love. Be prepared for more ; in becoming subordination to my holy will, thirst after still more crosses and afflictions ; pray for them, arm yourself, beforehand, for

every assault of fortune ; challenge the cross, as it were, and meet sufferings with an eager desire to overcome their sting.

Be sure of one thing : whatever may assail you,—sickness, pain, poverty, abandonment, ignominy, misery,—I have adapted all to your strength,—you will be able to bear it. I am faithful, and will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able to bear. (1. Cor. 10 : 13.)

Come, O Cross of my Jesus ! come,—no matter how widely your arms are extended, I embrace thee, and putting my confidence in God, I am prepared never to forsake thee.

Thrice-welcome, O holy sign of salvation ! Since Jesus suffered on thee nameless tortures, since he shed all his blood on thee, all terror has departed from thee, and naught save unction, consolation, and sweetness, mingled with the blood of Christ, trickle down from thee upon him who believingly embraces thee !

Welcome, sign of victory ! Away, ye powers of evil ! In the name of the holy Cross, depart hence ! And thou, wicked world,— blind, foolish, deceitful world,—behold, now the Cross separates us,—a stumbling-block to thee, but the power and wisdom of God to me ! (1. Cor. 1 : 23, 24.)

Come what may ; many waters, streams of suffering, shall not quench my love for thee, O Jesus, O Bridegroom of my heart ! neither shall the floods drown it. (Cant. 8 : 7.)

159.

THIRST FOR CROSSES.

"*For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*"
(Phil. 1 : 21.)

O Lord, how tenderly and indulgently thou dealest with me!

I must almost fear not yet to be of the number of thy beloved ones; thou dost not visit me with sufferings and afflictions; on the contrary, they seem to fly before me.

True, I have little deserved such a favor,—I am not yet worthy of the distinction of thy cross.

How insignificant are the trials thou occasionally sendest me!

Alas! I must be still very weak and cowardly, since thy hand dares not yet to touch me by severe trials. (Job 2 : 5.)

O God of my heart, try now my courage! Send me sufferings, grant me the cross; here cut, here burn, but spare me in eternity!

More and more, O Jesus, that I may become more like to thee, that I may, in some measure, return thy ineffable love!

More yet, my Saviour, that I may atone for the delinquencies of my youth, and, one day, find grace before thee!

More yet, O my God, that sin may never again re-enter

my heart, and that, with prosperity, the malice of sin which has so long devastated it, may never more work its ruin therein.

More yet, O Lord, that the sting of concupiscence may be effectually blunted, that my youthful impetuosity may be broken, and the dangers which threaten me with perdition, be more and more lessened!

More yet, O my Jesus, that, in thy glorious army, I may not occupy the most inglorious place, and, like a coward, desert thee in the combat.

More yet, O Lord, that I may become somewhat like those heroes who either fell victims to your honor in the bloody field of battle, or, in the austerity of penance, created for themselves, a no less painful, if unbloody, martyrdom.

More yet, O my God, that my reward in the world to come may not be a sparing one, and that I may not then hide my face in confusion before those great souls to whom to live was Christ, and to die was gain.

O that I possessed the heroic sentiments of the Saints; A St. Ignatius, seeing the wild beasts that were to tear him to pieces in the arena, exclaimed: The wheat of Christ I am; the teeth of the lions must grind me that I may be found as pure bread! And before this, he had already written: Now I begin to be a disciple of Christ. Fire, cross, and wild beasts may await me. My bones may be mashed, my limbs fall to pieces, my whole body be crushed, —may all the torments which the ingenuity of Satan can invent, be wreaked upon me, if I only have part in Christ! O that I might enjoy the happiness of being torn to pieces, provided I may not be rejected!

O God! how wonderfully dost thou strengthen the souls that truly love thee! How great is the multitude of thy sweetness, O Lord, which thou hast hidden for them that

fear thee (Ps. 30 : 20), that put their trust in thee, and prefer thee above all creatures !

How is the just man filled with comfort ! how exceedingly he abounds with joy in all his tribulations ! He would not exchange his lot with that of the happiest man on earth. (2. Cor. 7 : 4.)

O mysterious contrast ! A drop of sinful joy is often as bitter as gall to the worldling in the midst of his amusements ; a drop of the love of God changes whole seas of bitter sufferings into sweetness and consolation.

Christian youth, ponder on this, and solve the riddle !

If you comprehend it well,—then, the fulness of heavenly wisdom has been disclosed to you. You, too, begin to be a disciple of Christ, and to bear the marks of the Crucified in your body,—that you have become conformable to your suffering Saviour.

160.

DETACHMENT FROM CREATURES.

"*All men are vain, in whom there is not the knowledge of God.*" (Wisd. 13 : 1.)

All men are vain, in whom there is not the knowledge of God ; and who, from the things that are seen, are not able to know him who is, nor by looking at the works, to comprehend who was the workman. (Wisd. 13 : 1.)

Young man, have you already come to this knowledge of God ? Do you know the source whence flow earthly

beauty and goodness, and whatever else you perceive in creatures that is amiable and perfect ?

All the rays of the sun, the warmest as well as the weakest, the most luminous as well as the less shining, have a common centre. In like manner, proceed from God, the Highest, Best, the Eternal Centre and Fountain of all good, all the rays of goodness and perfection which we perceive and admire in creatures.

Earthly majesty displays itself before your eye. Lo ! it is but the faint shadow of that unspeakable glory, in which he clothes himself, who inhabiteth light inaccessible (1 Tim. 6 : 16), who maketh the clouds his chariot, and who walketh upon the wings of the wind ; who maketh his Angels spirits, and his ministers a burning fire. (Ps. 103 : 3, 4.)

Earthly greatness blinds you ; it descends from on high — a faint reflex of that greatness and majesty, which God has of himself. I am who am. (Exod. 3 : 14.)

You are astonished at the power of men, and it seems to you that nothing can resist the mighty ones of this earth. But there is no power but from God. (Rom. 13 : 1.) Almighty is God. What he wills, he can do. He knows no obstacle. Even the cedars of Lebanon he breaks like weak reeds. (Ps. 28 : 5.) Thou art terrible, O Lord, and who shall resist thee ? (Ps. 75 : 8.)

You reverence human justice. He imparts it, of whom it is said : Justice shall be the girdle of his loins (Is. 11 : 5), and : Thou art just, O Lord ; and all thy judgments are just, and all thy ways are mercy, and truth, and judgment. (Tob. 3 : 2.)

You rejoice in the mildness and goodness of men. But how good and sweet art thou, O Lord, in all things ! (Wisd. 12 : 1.)

Thou being master of power, judgest with tranquillity, and

with great favor disposest of us. (Wisd. 12 : 19.) Thou, O Lord, art sweet and mild, and plenteous in mercy to them that call on thee ! (Ps. 85 : 5.)

Human knowledge appears great to you—human skill astonishes you. O science, how simple and insipid is thy lisping in comparison with the strong word and wise thoughts of God ! From him, the spirit of man has all that it knows, or seeks to know. Man's power of thought is not able to reach anything that does not lie open and naked, known from eternity before the eye of God. (Hebr. 4 : 13.) Whence cometh wisdom ? and where is the place of understanding ? (Job 28 : 20.) God understandeth the way of it ; and he knoweth the place thereof. For he beholdeth the ends of the world ; and looketh on all things that are under heaven. Who made a weight for the winds, and weighed the waters by measure, when he gave a law for the rain, and a way for the sounding storms. Then he saw it, and declared, and prepared, and searched it. (Job 28 : 23-27.)

You meet with virtue and moral greatness ;—God is holiness itself.

This is the song which the elect sing day and night in heaven : Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, who is, and who is to come. (Apoc. 4 : 8.) And of him, it is said : The Lord is faithful in all his words : and holy in all his works. (Ps. 144 : 13.) Behold, from this source flows all the purity, all the moral goodness of men !

You look around you, and hail in your young companions the bloom of a fresh and beautiful life. A full and elastic vigor seems to be a part and parcel of youth. Immortality, however, is the Lord's, because he has life both in and out of himself ; whatever else lives, lives through him, and because he lives. He also is the eternally immutable ; heaven and earth shall pass away but thou, O God, shalt continue,

and they shall all grow old as a garment, and as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed ; but thou art the self-same, and thy years shall not fail. (Hebr. 1 : 11, 12.)

With what rapturous pleasure you contemplate earthly beauty ! But how beautiful must he be in whom there is not, nor can be, any spot ; who is all light, and in whom there is not the least shadow or darkness ! (1. John 1 : 5.)

Here, then, love reaches its summit. It wills God alone, God in all, God above all. It desires creatures only in connection with the Creator. It looks

From Nature up to Nature's God,—

from what the sun shines upon, to the Sun itself, to the source and centre of all light.

Thus, all creatures, the sun, the moon, and the stars, the earth, air and water, hills and valleys, fields and forests, fruits and flowers, animals, yea, and men with all their works, become together as a gigantic record on which the perfections of my God are written in glowing and luminous characters, are brought before my mind's eye in all their variety and unity, their independence, their influence, their mutual relations.

God is the centre of all. The united works of his almighty hand form, as it were, a many-stringed lyre, upon which a variety of majestic tones blend together, and yield to my entranced ear one infinitely sweetly-sounding harmony.

Ah ! from how many aberrations would such a view of things preserve us ! No inordinate attachments would ever find room within us. All excess and abuse of our affections would soon have an end. Earthly beauty would no longer kindle sinful love in our hearts ; earthly goods no more allure us to their extravagant use : on the

contrary, eagle-like, our souls would soar aloft to the highest, the most beautiful, the best. We would divest the creature of its earthliness, and love in it only that which is supernatural. We would love it in such a manner, as to prevent all disorder. Every affection would be well-regulated, crime would give place to virtue, punishment to reward.

In all things, we would seek, and find God, the most amiable, God, the best,—realizing that to adhere to him is good.

With such views, how different would be your inner life, young man!

In what a different light, would the world appear to you!

What a different opinion you would entertain of the sufferings, the annoyances, the calamities of life! Their bitterness would be changed into sweetness; the intolerable would become to you a source of consolation.

Of course, suffering as such, and divested of its higher relations, will never appear lovely or desirable to man; it is contrary to nature, to be, or to desire to be, unhappy; but misfortune ceases where assent begins, and where the will cheerfully embraces the will of God.

In misery, we should separate the earthly bitterness from the supernatural good, and love the former for the sake of the latter. Every cross is good, inasmuch as it comes from God, proceeds from his holy will, and by his permission; it is good because, thereby, he intends our advantage and everlasting reward. (Rom. 8 : 28.)

Hence, my son, love tribulation,—and what a little while ago appeared to you bitter—what seemed utterly opposed to your happiness, will become to you the source of an immovable equanimity, of the sweetest spiritual consolation, and most exalted gratitude to God.

These are mysteries, young man, but they are not unsearchable ; they need only the light of faith ; and to understand them, is consummate wisdom.

O that these riddles might be solved by you ! You will yet be confronted by many troubles, in the course of your life—your feet may stray in many a thorny path—many storms may gather darkly over your head. What an immense gain it is to see the light which enlightens the obscurity of this valley of tears,—to gain a height from whose stand-point all that is most intolerable appears endurable, nay, even amiable and desirable.

161.

SELF-ANNIHILATION.

"*He that shall lose his life for my sake, shall find it.*"
(Matt. 20 : 19.)

All that is good in creatures originates from God, and is to be referred to God. Consequently, I must renounce myself, I must die to myself.

Lord, I am thy creature. I have everything from thee. Whatever is good, praiseworthy, or amiable within me, has flowed from the inexhaustible fountain of thy infinite perfections !

To thee, I must teach myself to return. In thee only can I again find myself.

I must love myself only in thee, love only thee in myself. Wherever my self-love prejudices thy love, there it

ceases to be a well-ordered love,—there, it becomes unholy, and damnable.

Why do we love ourselves? Either because we are good, or think ourselves good. But who gave us the good we possess? Who is the model, the pattern, the original of all our good? Thou, alone, O God! our highest and best Good!

An inordinate esteem of ourselves originates from this, that we lose sight of the infinite Good, and, consequently, notice no longer the infinite distance which exists between our real or imaginary good qualities and the perfections of the holiest and most amiable God.

To find one's self again in God,—what a gain! To be able to say in truth: I live, now not I: but Christ liveth in me (Gal. 2 : 2),—what a pledge of a happy future life!

Behold, this is to find one's life after having lost it for God's sake. (Matt. 10 : 39.)

How hard it is for man to renounce himself, to separate himself from himself, to thrust the death-bringing steel into his corrupt nature, to destroy in himself all that is sinful, sensual, and selfish!

Such detachment is difficult, to youth especially—the season so universally devoted to idleness, to selfish pleasure, and enjoyment.

Then again—it is good to die to myself. He who wishes to find his soul, must lose it in that holy manner. Unless the grain of wheat fall into the ground, and die, itself remaineth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life, shall lose it: and he that hateth his life in this world, keepeth it unto life everlasting. (John 12 : 24, 25.) Why do I hesitate, why delay, making a perfect sacrifice of myself?

Let all perish in me that is not divine!

Let the old man die with his concupiscence and malice ; away with him, away with him ! crucify him !

Let the flesh be subject to the spirit, and the spirit to God.

Restore in me, O God, thy original image and likeness, as it was once imprinted in Adam, but disfigured by his sin.

May my heart be more and more purified, more and more detached from earthly things ; may my soul be absorbed in heavenly things, my thoughts continually directed to the things above !

May my eye be continually fixed upon that uncreated Beauty, that highest, everlasting Good, which alone is worthy of all my desire, of all my aspirations, of all my love !

O joy ! O consolation ! O happiness ! God is mine, and I am, finally, God's.

O life, which alone deserves the name of living ! O foretaste of heaven, which consists in the undivided possession of God !

O world, farewell ! Though late, I have found the truth. I have come, after all, to the knowledge that God abundantly bestows what thou didst promise to give, but never yet hast given me !

162.

GOD ABOVE ALL.

"*But it is good for me to adhere to my God, and to put my hope in the Lord God.*" (Ps. 72 : 28.)

O God, my God, when shall I love thee perfectly ?

When shall I have so fully renounced creatures, that thou alone shalt live and reign in my heart ?

When shall I have so mortified nature within me, so di-

vested my heart of all inordinate attachments to creatures, and all affection for myself, that thou canst enter into it, take undisputed possession thereof, and inhabit it without fear of ever again being disturbed ?

O most generous God, who givest the good Spirit to them that ask thee (Luke 11 : 13), add this to thy past benefits, and grant me to love thee above all !

O that I loved thee more than all that are near and dear to me, viz. : parents, brothers, sisters, benefactors, friends,—more than those persons in whom I revere great and amiable qualities.

O that I loved thee more than money and possessions, more than earth's precious things and treasures, more than glory and human praise, more than comfort and worldly pleasures !

O that I loved thee more than myself, more than my understanding and my liberty, more than my body and my senses, more than my ease and well-being, more than health and life !

O how blind, how infatuated, how cold I am !

Marvelous contrast ! My young heart is keenly susceptible to all impressions ; it is easily won, and captivated by trifles. And yet, much as thou hast done for me, I am ungrateful enough to forsake thee ! Thy love for me can never be expressed by earthly language, or measured by earthly measure,—and yet, I am not vanquished by it ; disorder and selfishness still reign in my heart ; I am still reserved, fickle-minded, cold, towards thee !

O Lord, give me another heart, if the vain love of the world or of self, have made the one I possess, so cold that it can never more be inflamed by love for thee ; give me a heart whose every fibre is devoted to thee,—a heart, which, as by natural instinct, closes itself against every creature, and opens its doors only to thee ; a heart which knows

only of thy love, and makes every other love subservient to thine.

What do I seek for ? For what do I wait ?

Will the beautiful things of youth ever be able to captivate me permanently ?

Alas ! how mutable are all created things ! What sparkles to-day in the freshest bloom, shall fade and die to-morrow. Thou, O Lord, thou, alone, art the essential beauty ; thou possessest it of thyself, and it is as imperishable as thyself.

O how insufficient is all that beauty which can only be attained or enjoyed through the senses ! In God, is all possible beauty. In him are united all the individual and limited perfections of creatures. To gaze on thee, O Beauty ever ancient and ever new, is to contemplate heavenly glory and exceeding, great delight !

It is good for me to adhere to thee.

Draw me after thee ; keep me with thee let me never be separated from thee for all eternity !

163.

HAPPINESS IN GOD.

" *Taste, and see that the Lord is sweet.*" (Ps. 33 : 9.)

What is happiness ?

Happiness is true felicity—happiness is harmony, concord, repose, peace.

The purer, the more ardent, my love for God, the happier I am in God.

Does not God completely satisfy me ? Have I anything

to desire, if I have God? This might be the case, if besides God there were yet another good, that did not come from God.

But no; God is the first and highest, and therefore, the only, good. He alone deserves the name of Good. One is good, God. (Matt. 19 : 17.) God is good in himself, and his goodness overflows upon all created beings.

O good God, how full of comfort is my soul, since it has found thee! In thee, I have everything. There is no expectation of my spirit, no desire of my heart, which cannot find satisfaction and gratification in thee!

But, how immeasurably would my happiness be increased, if I could but penetrate more deeply into thee! Spirit and heart would then approach nearer and nearer to their aim and end, and the harmonious development of all the powers and faculties of the soul, would fill my whole being with the purest joy and consolation.

How truly hath St. Augustine said: The heart of man is restless until it finds repose in thee, O God!

The spirit seeks and searches;—truth is its element. The heart desires;—goodness is its element.

The purest truth is God, the most perfect good is God. Love unites. Spirit and heart, then, arrive at that to which, according to their nature, they aspire. And shall not man be happy, exceedingly happy, through, and in, the love of God?

Happiness is freedom. The world talks much about freedom. Liberty is the watch-word of youth, in particular.

You love freedom? Love God, and you are free—and the freer, the more you love God.

The more you love God, the more fetters you will be freed from; the more you escape creatures, the more you escape yourself.

The more you love God, the more closely your will will

be fused into, and made one with, the holy will of God. And is not God freedom itself? You shall share his liberty, the freedom wherewith Christ made us free.

The more you love God, the more you remove yourself from evil; but the height of liberty is, to be not even able to depart from the path of rectitude—to have only the choice between good and good.

The fewer masters we have, the freer we are. He who loves God above all, who loves nothing except for God's sake, except in God,—he who finds God in everything, and refers everything to God,—acknowledges, inreality, only God as his Lord and Master; consequently, he enjoys an independence such as is unknown to the great ones of this earth.

Behold the freedom of the God-loving soul! Do you not see how she hastens without any hindrance to God? She knows but one end: The honor and glory of her God.

Neither is she dependent in any way upon success or failure. She has done her part, and has done it for God's sake; therefore, she is quiet. She has found God, and attained her chief end, whether success or seeming failure crowns her labor and pain. Her only solicitude is to please God,—and she pleases God when she does her duty; the rest, she leaves to God.

O holy freedom of the children of God!—inexplicable riddle to that slave which is called the world! How grand thou art! how powerfully thou hast manifested thyself in the martyrs! How victorious, in the holy confessors! Who, they cry out,—who shall dare attempt to separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulations? or distress? or famine? or nakedness? or danger? or persecution? or the sword? O no, for I am sure, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 8: 35, 38, 39.)

164.

PURE FRATERNAL CHARITY.

" *He that loveth his brother, abideth in the light.* "
(1. John 2 · 10.)

To the gold of fraternal charity, the dross of many a less noble metal frequently attaches itself. To separate the one from the other, is the painful task of a soul that truly aspires to perfection.

As self-love hinders the pure love of God, so it is also self-love which deforms the love of our neighbor, rendering it suspicious, and depreciating its value.

Where shall we find love that is free from selfishness ?

We love our neighbor, because we count upon a return of love.

We love our neighbor, because there is a prospect that he will repay us.

We love our neighbor, because it gives us satisfaction.

We love our neighbor, because we promise ourselves therefor, the award of human applause.

We make distinctions, we savor only too much of flesh and blood.

Our affections are governed by caprice. We love when we are in good humor ; and grow cold when we are displeased or injured.

The gold of our loves does not stand the test of fire. The least trifle is capable of alienating our heart from our neighbor. Real or imaginary ingratitude embitters us ; an insignificant misunderstanding leads to coldness, and even

to dissension and discord ; the smallest disregard for our person awakens anger, excites petty revenge, leaves behind, in the heart, deep traces of the insult. How quickly is suspicion aroused ! How easily does jealousy awaken !

Young man, God does not treat us in this manner. He gives generously to us ; he pours out blessing upon blessing ;—and although we make him no return, he prevents us by his goodness : he does good to us, knowing that we shall requite him with evil ; we offend and insult him, and he caresses us ; we assail him with insolence and contempt, and he spares us !

Charity is gold ; gold does not lose its value, so long as it remains gold. Even if covered with dust, forgotten, defaced, it still remains a noble, a royal metal. Gold assumes the finest, most exquisite forms ; it can be extended and expanded, almost to infinitude. The purer it is, the more precious, and the better adapted for the manufacture of delicately-wrought trinkets and ornaments.

Young man, ask yourself : Whom do I love ? Why do I love ? How do I love ? When and how long do I love ? If, in a sincere answer to these questions, you find that self-love has part in the love of your neighbor, (be it with regard to person, motive, manner, or extent,) then there is need of purification ; the dross must be separated from the gold,—yes, if necessary, by fire.

Be not afraid of the labor or pain attendant upon this process. Charity is the queen of virtues. He that loveth his brother, abideth in the light, and there is no scandal in him. (1. John 2 : 10.)

Only too easily does the earthly, the sensual, mingle with the affections of youth. Be careful. Give your love a supernatural basis. Be not deceived by form and appearance. The divine image, the person of Christ in one's neighbor, the will and good pleasure of God, must be everything to you.

165.

WORKS OF MERCY.

"According to thy ability, be merciful" (Tob. 4 : 8.)

How much Christianity insists upon the active love of one's neighbor, you know very well. Our holy religion is the religion of love.

He who does not love in action as well as in word, does not love at all.

He that hath the substance of this world, and shall see his brother in need, and shall shut up his bowels from him ; how doth the charity of God abide in him ? (1. John 3 : 17.) This holds good not only of almsgiving, but of every work of mercy, for the performance of which, we are not destitute of ways and means.

You, young man, you must not neglect those good works, which will imprint on your moral character the stamp of genuineness, and offer to your love new and abundant nourishment.

It may be that the occasion of actively assisting one's neighbor is not often offered to the young, either because their possessions are not yet at their own free disposal, or because they are, as yet, but little acquainted with the requirements of their social relations ; the eye of charity, however, is very keen—it soon discovers where help is needed, and how help can be given.

And, since the God of love desires us all to do what we

can, with his co-operation, the young man finds the practice of good works an easy matter, provided he be well penetrated with this conviction : The commandment of active charity concerns me as well as others !

Works of Christian mercy are : To feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked, to harbor the harborless, to ransom the captives, to visit the sick, to bury the dead.

Choose.—If you can practise all of these works, do so. If you cannot practise all, at least do some of them. The easiest of all is almsgiving. Who has not from time to time, some little thing that he can give to the poor ?

Perhaps you possess some superfluity—some object given you for your own enjoyment ; divide it with the poor. Many a young man's need could be alleviated by you ! Do you know of no one to whom a small gift would be welcome ?

O, it is a sweet feeling to have made another happy, to nave conferred a benefit on him, to have prepared for him a pleasant moment ! Remember the words of the Lord Jesus : It is more blessed to give than to receive. (Acts 20 : 35.)

Do you not know that alms deliver from all sin, and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness ? (Tob. 4 : 11.)

Alms deliver from death ; and the same is that which purgeth away sins, and maketh to find mercy and life everlasting. (Tob. 12 : 9.)

Water quencheth a flaming fire : and alms resisteth sins. (Ecclus. 3 : 33.)

According to thy ability, be merciful. (Tob. 4 : 8.)

Alms shall be a great confidence before the most high God, to all them that give it. (Tob. 4 : 12.)

Daniel gave this counsel to the proud king : O king, let

my counsel be acceptable to thee, and redeem thou thy sins with alms, and thy iniquities with works of mercy to the poor : perhaps he will forgive thy offenses. (Dan. 4 : 24.)

Therefore, said Tobias, according to thy ability, be merciful. If thou have much, give abundantly : if thou have little, take care, even so, to bestow willingly a little. (Tob. 4 : 8, 9.)

Try it ; study in all quietude and truth, to be merciful for God's sake. When you have once realized how it refreshes the heart to sow blessings, you will never desist from it. Casting joy into the heart of the afflicted, you will find that God will fill your own heart with joy, with sweetest consolation, with that delightful consciousness of his approval, which follows hard upon a good deed done for God's sake.

And if your alms be attended with some personal sacrifice or privation, your gift will have a double value before God, entitling you to a double reward from his hands.

Moreover, almsgiving reacts with a peculiar blessing upon the heart of the donor.

A merciful heart is, generally, more docile to the inspirations of God. He who is kind and gentle to his neighbor, cannot be hard towards God, or refuse what he demands.

A merciful heart is, generally, a noble heart ; therein, high, sublime thoughts easily gain admittance ; therein, great resolutions are easier made, take quicker root, thrive and ripen more perfectly.

A merciful heart is also a rich heart ;—rich in virtues, which bloom from the beautiful plant of mercy ; rich in personal blessings ; rich in merits before God ; rich in the future favor of the great Judge, Christ our Lord.

Therefore, according to our ability, let us be merciful. (Tob. 4 : 8.)

O, let us recognize Christ himself in the person of our

needy fellow-man. Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me. (Matt. 25 : 40.)

Let us make to ourselves friends of the mammon of iniquity, that one day we may be received into the everlasting dwellings. (Luke 16 : 9.)

In imitation of our Saviour, let us pass through the world, doing good. Let us by our noble actions, strive to blot out the horrid stains which monsters of avarice, cruelty and inhumanity have left upon the curse-laden earth.

O, let us dry up some of the innumerable tears which constantly roll from the eyes of the children of Adam !

O, let us do our part to mitigate the heavy burden of sorrow and pain, that lies upon so many suffering hearts !

Son, defraud not the poor of alms ; and turn not away thy eyes from the poor. (Ecclus. 4 : 1.) On the contrary, practise all good works, and thou shalt be as a merciful son of the Most High, and he will have mercy on thee more than a mother. (Tob. 4 : 10, 11.)

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. (Matt. 5 : 7.)

166.

ZEAL FOR SOULS.

"*He who causeth a sinner to be converted from the error of his way, shall save his soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins.*" (James 5 : 20.)

By the love which you bear to your own precious soul, and which you cannot refuse to her, without proving yourself void of reason and faith—save souls, do good to

souls, convert souls, reform souls, lead souls to heaven!

Is it enough not to ruin souls?

Is it a merit that you have not purposely pushed any one into the sea, and thus, exposed him to a watery grave?

You are standing on the shore during a storm, and, close to you, ship-wrecked people are wrestling and struggling in the water for life. Will you not throw to them a rope, a plank—wherewith to rescue themselves? Will you not stretch out your hand to them; or, better still, launch out your boat, to pick up the sinking survivors of the wreck? You say: It is none of my business; I must take care of myself. O selfish, comfortless words! O language of Cain! who sulkily said: Am I my brother's keeper? Can it be a matter of indifference to us, whether souls persevere in sin or not? What would you think, if Jesus had spoken such language? if the Apostles and their successors, whom God decreed, in his love, to snatch us from eternal death, had exclaimed: This is no business of ours; let every man take care of himself?

But you urge: What opportunity have I of being useful to souls? What can a young man do? Who will heed what he says?

Young man, have you not also your own little circle? Do you meet nobody, associate with no one? Have you no brothers and sisters, no friends, no companions, no school-mates? Do you not meet people who have immortal souls, elsewhere, than in the family circle, or among your usual acquaintances?

Know, that an upright, conscientious, prudent young man can do a great deal of good to others. Just because no one expects him to be an apostle, he finds more easy access to hearts, sows good seed more imperceptibly, yet incites to virtue more impressively.

And then, there are so many spiritual works of mercy:

To correct sinners, to teach the ignorant, to counsel the doubtful, to comfort the afflicted, patiently to bear injuries, to forgive those that offend us, to pray for the living and the dead. You have your choice.

Good example alone is most efficacious, and saves innumerable souls. You are bound to give a good example ; to do otherwise, would be to fail in your duty. In and of itself, it is true, good example is not, properly speaking, zeal for souls,—especially, when it does not extend beyond the fulfilment of one's common Christian duties. We live among men, and, consequently, men will notice ifwe do our duty, and can be edified thereby, if they will.

To pray for others, to recommend their spiritual progress to the Lord,—this is really a part of that zeal for souls, which must accompany every other good work ; it is God, alone, who giveth increase to the good seed. (1. Cor. 3 : 7.) Truly zealous for souls, is he who deliberately, purposely, and consciously says or does what is apt to be profitable to the soul of his neighbor.

This holy zeal, however, must not be destitute of certain qualities ; like every other virtue, it must remain faithful to its nature, and move within certain limits.

True zeal for souls is prudent. Prudence, far from being rudely officious, makes us attentive to the proper time, shows us the appropriate means, the right measure, and the reasonable limits.

Zeal for souls must be well-ordered. You must not rush needlessly into danger, in order to effect good. He that is evil to himself, to whom will he be good ? (Ecclus. 14 : 5.) He who does not strive for heavenly goods for himself, how can he prove himself careful for others ? Our zeal must be regulated by the greater or less danger of him whom we seek to help.

Zeal for souls must be intrepid. Shall you be able to do any good, if you are timid and cowardly ?

Zeal for souls must be patient. Be prepared for resistance.

Do not lose heart if obstacles oppose you. The fortress rarely yields to the first assault. Oftentimes calculating perseverance has brought about that which has long defied impetuous courage.

Acquire such a zeal for souls.

Does not the indefatigable zeal of Satan abash you,—the unflaggingenergy of hell, which attempts everything, and shrinks from nothing, in order to draw souls to perdition ?

Behold, how the busy, dauntless demons continually go about, like roaring lions, seeking whom they may devour. (1. Pet. 5 : 8.)

You pray so often : Thy kingdom come. Are you in earnest ? What do you do for the coming of God's kingdom ? What do you do for the propagation, strengthening, and extension of the kingdom of God in the hearts of men ?

Strip yourself, young man, of your narrow-minded self-love. Say not : I will be satisfied if I save my own precious soul ! O no ! take with you into heaven whomsoever you meet on the way. What tongue can tell the gratitude of those whom your charity has helped to place in the mansions of eternal bliss !

Here, is a dangerous familiarity, which you destroy by your influence ; there, a violent character, which is pacified by your gentleness ; now, you refute the heretical opinions, or remove pernicious prejudices ; you discountenance or rebuke improper, or indecent language.

Here, you throw in a good word at the right time ; there, you place a pious book in some young companion's hand. Now, you keep one of your associates from bad company ; now, you bring him into contact with good people. Now, you invite one of your acquaintances to go with you to confession and Communion ; again, you requesta friend to take part in a work of mercy.

Who can detail all the artifices which a holy love and zeal for souls suggest ?

And what will be the reward, young man, of all such noble endeavors ? My brethren, if any of you shall err from truth, and any one convert him : he must know, that he who causes a sinner to be converted from the error of his way, shall save his soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins. (James 5 : 19, 20.)

167.

THE DEATH OF THE JUST MAN.

"*Say to the just man that it is well.*" (Is. 3 : 10.)

Woe to me that my sojourn is prolonged ! (Ps. 119 : 5.) O my God, how I long for thy holy Sion ! how my soul longeth and fainteth for thy courts and thy altars ! (Ps. 83 : 3.)

I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ. (Phil. 1 : 23.) Who will give me wings like a dove, and I will fly and be at rest ! (Ps. 54 : 7.)

All around me are misery, and wretchedness, without measure and without end ; every where, danger, warfare, and vexation. Nowhere, consolation ; nowhere, lasting repose or peace. On every side, bad people, pernicious allurements, a wicked world. No security, except in the land of stability ; no peace, except in the land of victory ; no joy, except in the land of eternal jubilation !

Patience, poor soul,—wrestle with the enemy, do manfully, expect the Lord, and let your heart take courage, and

wait for the Lord. (Ps. 26 : 14.) Expect the Lord in patience ; he will deliver you from the bonds of mortality. If you feel a strong desire for the holy heights ; if you find yourself urged to aspire from this valley of tears to that place for which you are destined,—rejoice, and be glad ! Foster that holy desire ; cherish it, nourish it,—not from cowardice or fear of the battle, but out of love, out of eagerness to be united for ever with God, the highest Good !

But ah ! before I arrive at this end,—there is much hard work yet to be done. The path I must travel is dark, dangerous, full of horrors. Death,—O death with all its terrors,—how the mere thought of it chills the blood, and benumbs the heart !

Fear not, O Christian, God-fearing soul ! Has not Jesus gone before you through this dark passage ? Yes, and he hath left upon the path shining traces, that we might follow him, full of confidence ; that we might overcome the terrors of death, and victoriously enter into the bright life of the glorified One.

No doubt, the just man is also subject to human infirmity. Death overtakes him ; frailty, pain, and necessity seize him, operate powerfully upon him. With great labor and violence, the spirit separates itself from the body : but—if the death of the wicked is very ill (Ps. 33 : 22), precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of the just. (Ps. 115 : 15.)

There, lies the good Christian,—peaceful and composed, awaiting his final hour. His countenance is serene ; his eye raises itself with confidence towards heaven. Temporal cares do not disturb him ; long since, he surrendered all things to the Lord. His heart is consoled, hoping to find grace before God. Long ago, he familiarized himself with the thought of death ; he well knows that grim spectre ; he has often looked straight into his gloomy eye. The dying

man clasps the crucifix, the blessed sign of his redemption, — how lovingly he presses it to his fast-whitening lips ! From Jesus, he learns how to die, as from Jesus, he has learned how to live.

There he lies, the good, pure-hearted young man ! Behind him, stretches a virtuous career ; before him, shines the bright river on whose further shore rises the kingdom of pure spirits, to whom he is drawn with an impetuous desire, as to the bosom of his dearest relations. Come, Lord Jesus, come ! (Apoc. 22 : 20) is his ardent sigh.

And Jesus comes. At his touch, the soul is separated from the body ! She soars aloft, surrounded by choirs of Angels—soars up to God in the land of the living. Hark to the sweet words from the lips of Jesus : Well done, good and faithful servant. (Matt. 25 : 23.) Come, thou blessed of my Father ! The portals of heaven are thrown wide open, and one more happy, blessed soul inhabits the courts of Paradise,—the legions of Saints number another glorious ransomed pilgrim in their glittering ranks !

Thus, dies the innocent soul — thus, she is rewarded, crowned and glorified for all eternity. Gladly she quits this sinful world, in order to enter the heavenly nuptial hall, arrayed in her spotless wedding-garment.

Thus, too, expires the fervent penitent. Thus, the converted sinner finishes his laborious course, and happily passes to an everlasting repose and security.

Let my soul die the death of the just, and let my end be like to them ! (Numb. 23 : 10.)

Sin, alone, can make death terrible. Sin transforms the messenger of God into a horrid phantom. A good death is nothing more than a journey through the Red Sea of suffering into the Promised Land of God, into a land that floweth with milk and honey. (Exod. 2 : 8.) Does not the angel of the covenant accompany us on that journey ?

Does not the pillar of fire go before us to guide our feet through the darkness ?

Say to the just man that it is well with him in that moment of departure, which the wicked so justly fear. The just man shall eat of the fruit of his doings. (Is. 3 : 10.) No guilty conscience torments him at the hour of death, no sad reminiscences then disturb the peace of his mind ; the approaching judgment has no terrors for him.

O, say to the just man that it will be well with him that hour ! The day's work is done,—the evening of rest is at hand,—the hour of reward is striking.

O, say to the just man that his lot is a happy one ! Past, are the uncertainty, the fear, the struggle. The end is attained,—salvation, secured ; the soul is saved,—heaven is gained !

O, say to the just man that it is well ! A surprise awaits him, unsuspected, inexpressible. A new world opens before him ; the Sun that shines therein makes the clearest, brightest radiance of this world appear but as a dark shadow.

Say to the just man that it is well ! His fetters are broken ; he is free at last. No creature can hold him any more ; without let or hindrance, he can hasten to the bosom of his God.

Say to the just man, that his felicity is ineffable. The hand which apparently despoiled, repays him with heavenly treasures. Death lays open those overflowing coffers. whose treasures outvie all the gold and gems of earth

Say to the just man that now, at last, he is happy. True, his earthly flowers have faded ; but now, blooming garlands of imperishable beauty are entwined about the brow of the victorious conqueror of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Say to the just man that it is well with him ; all is con-

summated; death has brought forth life, and the Christian, like the sun which has been briefly submerged in the clouds of night,—rises again, rejuvenated, in changeless loveliness and deathless splendor!

O say to the just man that it is well with him,—now, and for evermore! Now, he reaps and enjoys the fruit of his labors,—he possesses, he rests, he enjoys.

168.

THE ETERNAL REWARD.

"*Behold, I come quickly: and my reward is with me, to render to every one according to his works.*"
(Apoc. 22 : 12.)

The Lord will not withhold from the victor the reward which he has so frequently and so solemnly promised him. He is faithful,—he is just and right. (Deut. 32 : 4.)

And what has God promised?

Lo! generous is the Lord; a rich rewarder is our good God! A man does his duty, and God recompenses him most liberally. He is liberal not only in his gifts—but also liberal, beyond human conception and expectation, in the manner of giving and the continuance of his gifts.

To him that overcometh, I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of my God. (Apoc. 2 : 7.) What a glorious immortality!

To him that overcometh, I will give the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone; and in the stone, a new

name written, which no one knoweth, but he that receiveth it. (Apoc. 2 : 17.)

And he that shall overcome, and keep my works unto the end, to him I will give power (Apoc. 2 : 26, 27) : and he shall reign and be powerful.

He that shall overcome, shall be clothed in white garments : and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life : and I will confess his name before my Father, and before his Angels. (Apoc. 3 : 5.)

He that shall overcome, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God ; and he shall go out no more : and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem. (Apoc. 3 : 12.)

To him that shall overcome, I will grant to sit with me in my throne : as I also have overcome and have sat with my Father in his throne. (Apoc. 3 : 21.)

The just shall shine, and shall run to and fro like sparks among the reeds. They shall judge nations, and rule over people, and their Lord shall reign for ever. (Wisd. 3 : 7, 8.)

The just shall live for evermore : and their reward is with the Lord, and the care of them with the Most High. Therefore, they shall receive a kingdom of glory, and a crown of beauty at the hand of the Lord : for with his right hand, he will cover them ; and with his holy arm, he will defend them. (Wisd. 5 : 16, 17.)

I myself, says the God of truth, am their protector, and their reward exceeding great. (Gen. 15 : 1.) I will be his God, and he shall be my son. (Apoc. 21 : 7.)

Thou thyself, O my God,—thou great, infinitely perfect God ! thou holy, amiable God ! O superabundance of fulfilled hopes ! O riches, O glory, O sweetness ! And—for ever shall I reign—never shall my part be diminished—much less, shall it be taken away from me. (Luke 10 : 42.)

Heaven is not merely a place where there is no more pain or suffering ; in heaven is all joy and bliss ; heaven is God himself !

True, the absence of every woe would be much ; the uninterrupted, ever-enduring enjoyment of whatever the purified senses are able to desire, would be in itself a fulness of bliss ; but as the pain of the damned consists not only in the torment of the senses, but chiefly in the loss of God, —so the height of heavenly bliss is the vision, the possession, and the enjoyment of God.

O Lord, thy mercy is in heaven, and thy truth reacheth even to the clouds ! (Ps. 35 : 6.) O, how hast thou multiplied thy mercy, O God !

We shall be inebriated with the plenty of thy house, and thou shalt make us drink of the torrent of thy pleasure. For with thee, is the fountain of life ; and in thy light, we shall see light. (Ps. 35 : 8-11.)

When, after death, the soul of the just man has been enabled by God to see him, after he has, as it were, immersed her in that light of glory which prevents the majesty of the Most High from overwhelming and annihilating her ; God gives himself to her that she may know, love, and see him—not as now, through a glass, in an obscure manner (1. Cor. 13 : 12) ; but as he is (1. John 3 : 2), face to face.

Beholding the glory of the Lord with face uncovered, she is transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2. Cor. 3 : 18.) In thy light, we shall see light. (Ps. 35 : 10.)

O incomprehensible wonders, wrought by the omnipotence, the love, and the generosity of our God ! To see God—here, all human thought stops short in awe and amazement. To see the Invisible—to know the Incomprehensible—to possess the Infinite ! What a marvel ! What a joy !

All the faculties of the soul participate in this happiness, especially the will—the most excellent of all.

O vain world ! farewell. Never more, does he long for thee, who has once seriously reflected upon heaven.

O Paradise ! fill my young heart with a restless desire for thee, that it may not cleave to these earthly clods, that all its fresh powers and faculties may be withdrawn from worldly thoughts and desires.

O service of my God, worthy of so great a reward,—why do I not devote myself to thee more fervently, more perfectly, more perseveringly ?

169.

THE HEAVENLY JERUSALEM.

" *Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, O Lord : they shall praise thee for ever and ever.* " (Ps. 83 : 5.)

And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband And I heard a great voice from the throne saying : Behold the tabernacle of God with men ; and he will dwell with them : and they shall be his people : and God himself with them shall be their God. (Apoc. 21 : 2, 3.)

Glorious things are said of thee, O city of God. (Ps. 86: 3.)

O new Jerusalem, thou shalt shine with glorious light : and all the ends of the earth shall worship thee. (Tob. 13 : 13.) The gates of Jerusalem shall be built of Sap-

phire, and of Emerald, and all the walls thereof round about of precious stones. All its streets shall be paved with white and clean stones, and Alleluia shall be sung in its streets. (Tob. 13 : 21, 22.)

And Jerusalem shall rejoice in her children, because they shall all be blessed, and shall be gathered together to the Lord. (Tob. 13 : 17.)

There, God shall wipe away all the tears from their eyes : and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more ; for the former things are passed away. (Apoc. 21. 4.)

The city itself will be pure gold, like to clear glass. (Apoc. 21 : 18.) No temple will be in it ; for the Lord God Almighty is the temple thereof, and the Lamb. (Apoc. 21 : 22.) The river of the water of life will flow there, clear as crystal ; and in the midst of the street thereof, and on both sides of the river, will be the tree of life, with its wonderful fruits. (Apoc. 22 : 1, 2.)

And the gates thereof shall not be shut by day : for there shall be no night there (Apoc. 21 : 25), nor fear of enemies.

The city needeth not sun nor moon to shine in it : for the glory of God hath enlightened it : and the Lamb is the lamp thereof. (Apoc. 21 : 23.) The Lord God shall enlighten them : and they shall reign for ever and ever. (Apoc. 22 : 5.)

Happy the people that hath these things, whose God is the Lord ! (Ps. 143 : 15.)

Blessed is the people that knoweth jubilation. They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance : and in thy name, they shall rejoice all day, and in thy justice they shall be exalted. (Ps. 88 : 16, 17.)

Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, O Lord : they shall praise thee for ever and ever ! (Ps. 83 : 5.)

How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts ! (Ps. 83 : 2.)

O, how great is the multitude of thy sweetness, O Lord, which thou hast hidden from them that fear thee ! (Ps. 30 : 20.)

Truly, the eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him. (1. Cor. 2 : 9.)

Behold, thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord. (Ps. 127 : 4.)

Dear young man, you are destined for all this glory. Why, then, do you suffer yourself to be drawn down into the mire of a sin-stained earth ?

Why do the insipid enticements of a miserable world prevail over you more than the unchangeable promises of God, with whom, and in whom, alone, are true riches, honors and pleasures ?

Why are you, in sight of such a reward, miserly and niggardly towards so liberal a God—reserved towards so communicative a God— narrow-hearted towards so generous a God ? Why is your magnanimity not inflamed ? Why does it not urge you to deeds of valor and to self-sacrifice ? Give, and it shall be given to you : good measure, and pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall they give into your bosom. (Luke 6 : 38.)

How your young life would blossom forth bright and rich in virtues, if you would often allow your thoughts to soar up to that heavenly Jerusalem, your true home beyond the clouds ;—if you would only permit the clear brightness of that divine City to penetrate into your heart, now veiled by the mists of the earth !

Let sinners possess this earth, if they will—let them cling to it, look upon it as their home, blind themselves with the dust which they constantly raise around them,—I will

entone songs of desire in my heart, I will bewail the misery of my pilgrimage, and raise the eye of my spirit to that beloved, radiant Jerusalem whence I came forth, and to which I shall, one day, return as to the place of my rest.

Upon the rivers of Babylon, there, I sit and weep : when I remember Sion : on the willows in the midst thereof, are hung up the instruments. The world approaches and invites to joy ; songs it desires to hear, the world that holds me captive, and haughtily says : Be merry, and sing to me a hymn of the songs of Sion. How shall I sing the song of Sion in Babylon ? Treacherous Babylon ! thou wilt that I forget Sion ? No, in a strange land, I shall not sing the song of the Lord ; in Babylon, I shall never feel at home ; here, no false joy shall make me enthusiastic. If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand be forgotten. Let my tongue cleave to my jaws, if I do not remember thee : if I make not Jerusalem the beginning of my joy. (Ps. 136 : 1-7.)

170.

HEAVEN AND EARTH.

"*Better is one day in thy courts above thousands.*"
(Ps. 83 : 11.)

Why do so many cling to this miserable world ?

Because of the brief joys, the passing pleasures, which they enjoy, or, expect to enjoy, therein.

And yet, those very pleasures are but a faint reflection of

those which await us above, and which, one day, are to superabundantly satiate our souls.

Earthly joys are capable of inflaming our desire ; those of heaven awaken no desire in us.

Behold, the joys of this lower world are common alike to the sinner and the just man ; and if such joys are sweet in their savor, what must be the bliss which God has reserved for his friends, which he imparts to his elect, and to the sharers of his glory ?

The earth offers us its fruits, the sun shines, the stars sparkle, the dews of heaven glitter most joyfully ; the flowers send forth their delicious odors ; hills and valleys alternate in pleasing succession ; seas and rivers, the air, the forests, and the plains, afford an abode for innumerable creatures designed for the use and benefit of man. All these goods, all these riches and pleasures, are free to sinners and blasphemers, as well as to the just. What think you then will heaven be to them who have served God faithfully, who have kept all his commandments, and done his will in all things ? If to his enemies he gives such great and beautiful things, have not his friends reason to expect infinitely greater, infinitely more beautiful gifts ?

O what a difference is there between heaven and earth, —between joys here, and joys hereafter ! Here, no pleasure is unalloyed ; every earthly joy is mingled with bitterness. How rarely are the beginning, the progress, and the end of a joy equally pleasant ! Sometimes, the acquisition is painful ; again, the consequence is disappointing ; and at last, most unexpectedly, the bitterest wormwood robs the long-desired delight of its agreeable relish.

The joys of heaven alone are pure, because in God alone goodness is without any admixture of evil. None is good but God alone. (Luke 18 : 19.)

Here, joy is so short-lived ; you have hardly begun to en-

joy the cup of lust, before it is snatched away from your lips. Even though its enjoyment should last for many years, death comes at last, and bewailing your fate, you cry out : I did but taste a little honey : and behold, I must die. (1. Kings 14 : 43.)

In heaven, is constant and everlasting joy, because God never changes. He is yesterday, and to-day : and the same for ever. (Hebr. 13 : 8.)

Here, no joy is complete, because we cannot fully enjoy any pleasure in this life. You may have a few drops, a little rivulet,—but only hereafter, can you possess the great Ocean, the mighty Source itself.

There, your joy shall be full (John 16 : 24) ; nothing will be wanting to it, because God himself constitutes it,—the highest, the best, the Source of all that is True, Good, and Beautiful.

Here, joys are often dangerous : sometimes, they lead us to forget the Creator ; sometimes, from an over-esteem of creatures, we pass from what is licit to what is forbidden, and become apostates, idolators, reprobates.

In heaven, there is no shadow of danger, for God himself is this heavenly joy ; and, in surrendering ourselves to it, we commit ourselves to God.

O, better and more precious is one day in the courts of heaven, than a thousand days and more in all the joys of the world. (Ps. 83 : 11.)

Young man, do you long for enjoyment ? Have patience. You are still a pilgrim on the road to your true country ; the traveler does not delay, or waste his time in amusements,—he hastens forward, hoping for all his joys in the bosom of his beloved home.

Alas ! many careless Christians, forgetful of their heavenly extraction, settle down here upon earth, as if they were to remain here for ever. Know they not that we have

not here a lasting city, but seek one to come in the next life, with God, in the heavenly Jerusalem ? (Hebr. 13 : 14.)

How did the Saints act? They pitched their tents here below, merely for a season, and were always ready to fold them, and exchange their temporary abode for the mansions of bliss in the city of God.

Lift up your heart, young man ! Seek the things that are above ; where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Mind the things that are above, not the things that are on the earth. (Col. 3 : 1, 2.)

Say, what is gold and silver ? What, honor ? What, the gratification of the senses ? What are power, glory, and renown ? What, luxury, riches, and human favor ! Do these things last ? Do they satiate ? do they give rest and peace ? Wait a little while ; have patience ; better, nobler, and more desirable things are reserved for you, if you but now renounce yourself, do violence to your passions, and enter upon the narrow way.

The narrow way ends in heaven ; the broad way leadeth to destruction. (Matt. 7 : 13.)

O Fatherland ! O Home, sweet Home ! O heaven, abode of my God, destined to be, one day, my abode,—draw me up to thee, with the chains of restless and resistless desire. Earth is not the place of my repose. The rest of my life shall be passed in meriting heaven. Seeking not for rest, here below,—I shall hasten rather to enter into everlasting rest and joy.

171.

THE HAPPY ETERNITY.

"*But we will walk in the name of the Lord, our God, for ever and ever.*" (Mich. 4 : 5.)

Happiness that is true and perfect, excludes any possibility of its coming to an end.

Hell would not be hell, heaven would not be heaven, if both were not eternal.

Let but one ray of hope penetrate into the black abyss of hell, and that which constitutes the especial torment of the damned, will be done away with ; let but one shadow of fear or uncertainty fall across the unchanging brightness of heaven, and the bliss of the elect is dimmed and obscured, their felicity is no longer a pure, a perfect one.

They (the just) shall go into life everlasting. (Matt. 25 : 46.)

The inheritance of the blessed is incorruptible and unchangeable ; a crown that fadeth not, is reserved in heaven for them. (1. Pet. 1 : 4.)

Your heart shall rejoice : and your joy no man shall take from you. (John 16 : 2 .)

The blessed in heaven shall be happy as long as God shall be God,—their beatitude being God himself, whom they behold and possess, and in whom they repose. And this God is eternal, immortal, unchangeable. (1. Tim. 1 : 17.)

Behold the tabernacle of God with men, . . . and he shall

wipe away all tears from their eyes : and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more. (Apoc. 21 : 3, 4.) They shall not hunger, nor thirst any more, neither shall the sun fall on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb shall rule them, and shall lead them to the fountains of the waters of life. (Apoc. 7 : 16, 17.)

Therefore, for all eternity, they shall taste only joy, consolation, peace, and happiness.

Can these happy souls ever be deprived of their heaven ? Nevermore !

Can they ever be separated from God ? Can their bliss ever be taken from them ? Nevermore !

The Lord shall reign for ever and ever. (Exod. 15 : 18.) And we will walk in the name of the Lord, our God, for ever and ever. (Mich. 4 : 5.)

O happiness above all happiness,—to be confirmed in happiness !

A whole eternity of this perfect bliss lies before me,—capable of no diminution, of no cessation !

All the splendors of earth shall have passed away, and my happiness endureth still !

Gold, silver, precious stones, and every fair and costly treasure which men esteem or desire, shall be consumed, or moulded into dust,—yet my riches will continue to endure !

Every earthly lust will be forgotten,—yet my joy shall go on increasing more and more !

One thoroughly happy day here below,—one day without labor, without care, without vexation, without any admixture of bitterness,—how rare and wonderful a thing is this ! Yet, in heaven, there are millions and millions of years of unalloyed joy, of undisturbed rest, of uninterrupted jubilation !

Imagine that the whole of this vast globe were to be

removed a grain at a time,—but only one grain of sand in a thousand years,—what a long, long time! Yet, rejoice, ye blessed in heaven, your joy will last longer!

Imagine that from the ocean, from all seas, lakes, rivers, brooks and fountains, only one drop should be drawn in a thousand years,—how long would be the time before the water-supply would be exhausted! Rejoice, ye elect, your joy in heaven would then be but beginning!

Imagine that every star in the firmament, every drop of dew or rain, every snow-flake, every leaflet, every blade of grass, represented a span of a thousand years,—what a long, long time! And yet, rejoice, O ye blessed in heaven, your joy will last still longer!

O good God! O generous God! for so brief a service, thou rewardest us with so prolonged a beatitude! What is man, that thou shouldst be mindful of him with such goodness? (Ps. 85 : 5)—that thou shouldst call him to a participation in thy own imperishable glory?

Thy friends, O God, are made exceedingly honorable; their principality is exceedingly strengthened. (Ps. 138: 17.)

And shall it cost me nothing to purchase such an eternal reward?

Depart from me, ye short-lived earthly enjoyments; thou miserable, perishable world, get thee behind me! Very soon thy syren-songs will die away, and the chalice of lust which thou offerest me, will soon be drained. Not so, the heavenly canticles of joy—not so, the pure joys of Paradise! False, seductive pleasures pursue me no longer, assailing my youth with deceit or violence! I now know where alone true, lasting happiness can be found.

Eternity, happy eternity, thou shalt be the end of all my endeavors! May the thought of it enliven my courage, inspire me to self-sacrifice, and strengthen me to final perseverance!

172.

GOD THE FINISHER.

"I am Alpha, and Omega, the beginning and the end."
(Apoc. 1 : 8.)

Thou, O Lord, wert before all beings ; and, after time and all earthly things have reached their end, thou wilt continue to be, without any change, for all eternity !

I am Alpha, and Omega, the beginning and the end, saith the Lord God, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty. (Apoc. 1 : 8.)

Everything proceeded from thee, O God, and everything, in turn, must return to thee. Thus, all the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea doth not overflow. (Eccles. 1 : 7.)

All things were made by thee, O Lord : and without thee was made nothing that was made. (John 1 : 3.) Thou art the efficacious cause of all things ; thou art also the final cause, the end of all. Through thee, and for thy sake, all things were made ; through thee, and in thee, all things find their consummation.

Thou hast created man that he may know, love, praise and serve thee. If he do thy holy will here upon earth, after a short time of probation, thou receivest him to thyself into heaven, and there completest in the most magnanimous manner what his free will has here begun. The faith-

ful soul is united to thee ; she knows thee, she passes over into thee, and henceforth, lives in, and of, thee.

From thee come those goods for which the heart of man longs. Thou art the last end of all and the highest Good, and besides thee, there is nothing that the soul desires.

In heaven, thou givest thyself entirely to her ; thou lovest, and permittest thyself to be loved ; thou ever satiatest the happy heart with new delights. There, the soul has reached her great end—God. She craves no more—her happiness is complete, immeasurable, although thou, the infinitely delightful Good, hast and canst have, no measure !

The more quickly and more perfectly one body is assimilated with another, the greater its influence upon the other. Thus, the fire has scarcely reached the wood, before the latter is united with the flames, and appears itself as fire.

Similarity of character, even here upon the earth, is the natural consequence of long-continued and intimate intercourse between two persons ; and this is effected the quicker and the more perfectly, the more influence one of the persons exerts over the other.

Think, then, of your soul, young man !—beholding God, reposing and living in God for all eternity, conversing without interruption, having continual intercourse with the highest and most perfect Good ! What a purifying of your spirit ! What an inflaming of your heart ! What light, what warmth, what knowledge, what love ! Many waters cannot quench charity, neither can the floods drown it. (Cant. 8 : 7.) This charity produces a total change in us ; it is placed as a seal upon the heart (Cant. 8 : 6), so that it assumes the imprint of the Beloved, and reflects his image more and more clearly.

Nay, illumined by the light of glory, the soul becomes as

like to God as a created spirit can resemble the Deity: she penetrates into God, and God, on his part, dwells within her in a new, a more perfect manner than before. God communicates himself to the soul—that is, everything worthy of knowing, everything sublime, beautiful, and delightful is offered her in God.

Upon this highest Good, the will throws itself with all the impetuosity of an inflamed desire; and, since no barrier can stop the soul, by means of divine love, she unites herself to God in the most perfect manner possible.

O divine life, O delightful life! what satisfaction, what unspeakable joy, when the soul, as it were, beside herself with happiness, is united with so sublime an object, is lost in God, in that unreserved and perfect manner, corresponding entirely to her nature!

If now, we are entranced with joy—if new life runs through our veins, and delight permeates our whole being, when a grand landscape presents itself to our view, or exquisite harmonies strike upon our ear: what delight will union with God prepare for our soul—a union so desirable to her, so agreeable to her essence—a union so perfect, a union which knows naught of separation.

Do you now comprehend the sacrifices of the Saints? Do you comprehend why they were drawn to God with such irresistible power? why, during their earthly exile, they could find consolation only in the thought that they were doing the will of him, who, throughout eternity, would be the crown of their will, and the reward exceeding great?

O, my dear young man, strive to work a change in your worldly, selfish heart. Ennoble it; labor, toil, strive, fear no pains. By your eternal salvation, by your hopes of a blissful hereafter, educate yourself for heaven, and build, without rest, the throne which you hope, one day, to ascend and enjoy.

Know, that your degree of glory above will correspond exactly to your perfection here below. With what measure you measure, it shall be measured to you again. (Matt. 7 : 2.)

If you now care but little to unite yourself with God,—if you are indolent, indifferent, self-sufficient,—well, then, the measure of your future happiness, the degree of your future vision, knowledge, and love, is far from great or high ; your own self-indulgence has lowered and limited it.

If, on the other hand, you love much ; if you strive seriously to advance in the knowledge and fear of God ; if you are solicitous to imitate Christ, to grow unto the perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ (Ephes. 4 : 13) ; then, your heavenly love and knowledge will be proportioned to your earthly efforts—the steps of your future throne, lifted up higher and higher—they approach nearer and nearer to the throne of the Most High.

O God, Author and Finisher of our faith, in whom all perfection has its origin, its growth, and its consummation, bless the good will, the feeble endeavors, of a young man, who ardently desires to be entirely thine in time and in eternity ! Give me holy purposes worthy of such an aim ; give me manly courage to execute them ; give me perseverance —yes, a perseverance which shrinks from nothing, and goes forth heroically and self-denyingly to its end !

O glorious resurrection from the deadly slumber of inactivity, cowardice, and lukewarmness ! O splendid illumination of that sombre darkness, wherein short-sightedness, blindness, narrow-mindedness have, hitherto, confined me !

On to the light ! On to true greatness—on to sanctity — onward and upward to the heights of heavenly perfection !

The Lord is the everlasting God, who hath created the ends of the earth : he shall not faint, nor labor ; neither is there any searching out of his wisdom. It is he that giveth

strength to the weary, and increaseth force and might to them that are not. Youths shall faint and labor, and young men shall fall by infirmity. But they that hope in the Lord, shall renew their strength ; they shall take wings as eagles ; they shall run and not be weary ; they shall walk and not faint. (Is. 40 : 28-31.) Like giants, they run their course to the last, the highest End,—and there, O delight ! are glorious thrones which invite them to rest, and every ransomed son shall cry out in overflowing felicity : Here is my rest for ever and ever ! here will I dwell, for I have chosen it. (Ps. 131 : 14.)

In omnibus glorificetur Deus. Amen.

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